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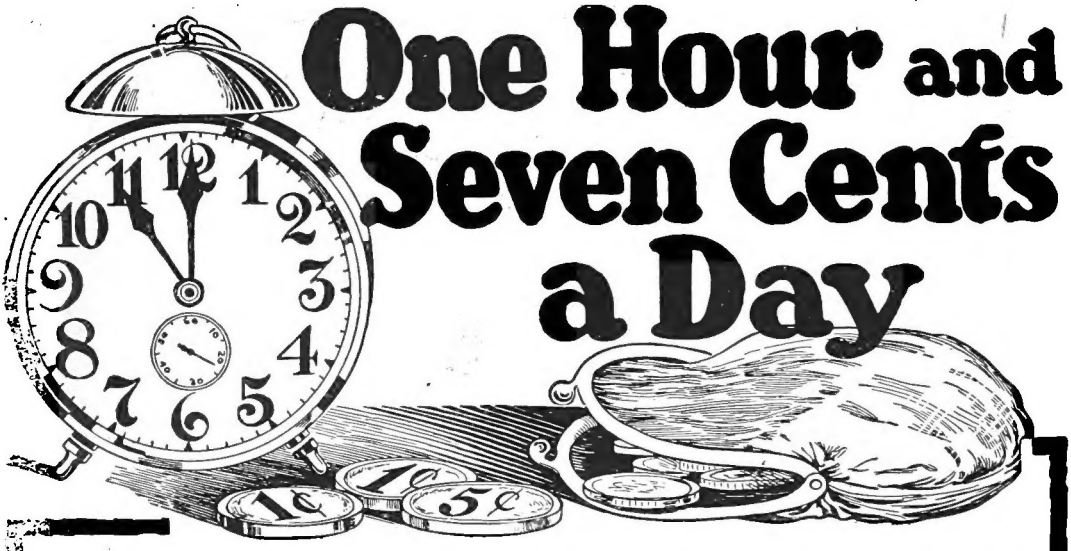

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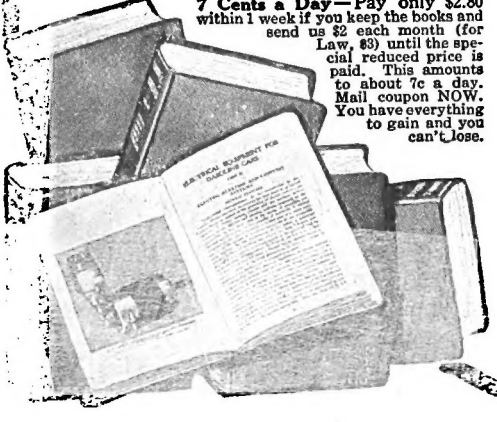

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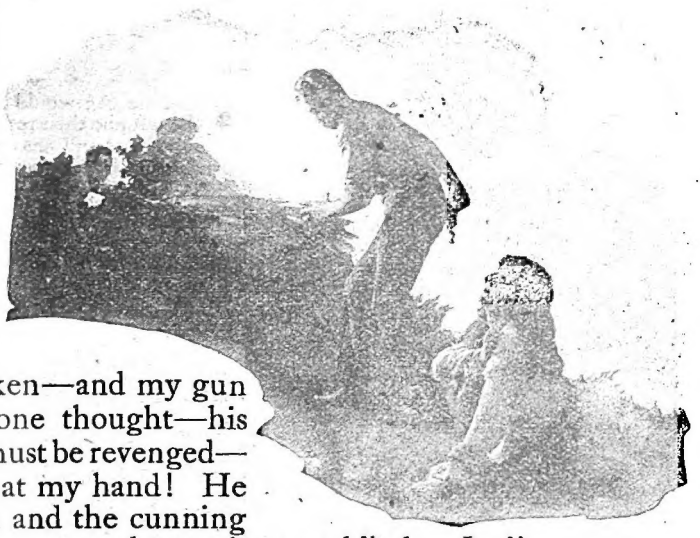

"I heard a shot—I saw **him** run—and then I saw **her** fall—the woman I loved. My leg was broken—and my gun was gone! I had only one thought—his strange, astounding plots must be revenged—he must die for a coward at my hand! He had the courage of a lion and the cunning of a rat. He came running toward me when, suddenly—I—"

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Adv. 4-3-20

ADVENTURE
April 3rd, 1920

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Vol. 25 No. 1
Serial No. 151

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A Few Hours

and the keg would be dry and soundless, and the raft and their rotting bodies would drift before the wind across the trackless sea! The chances of rescue were slight for the girl and

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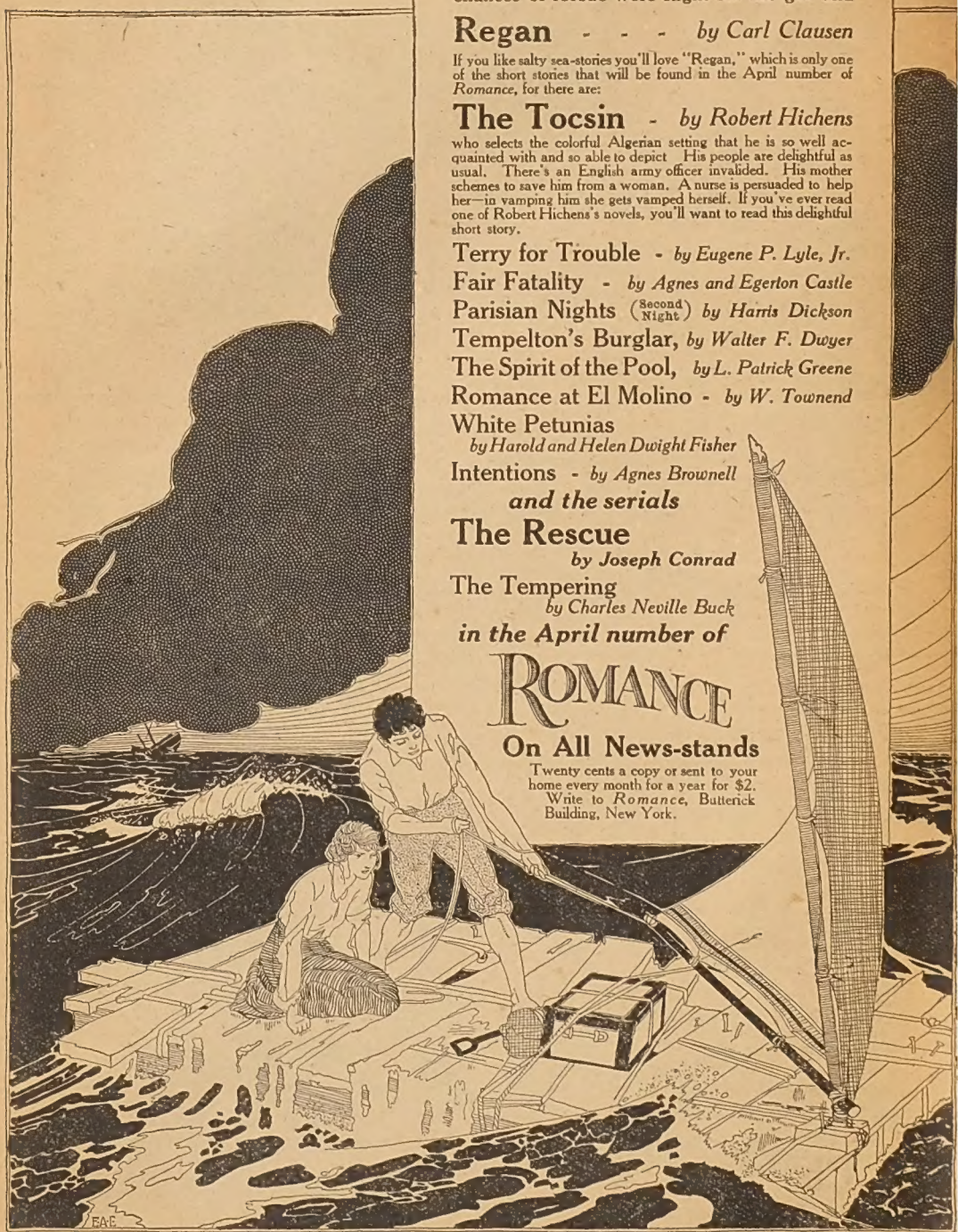

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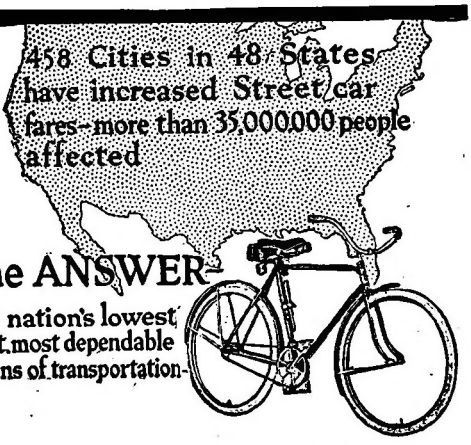

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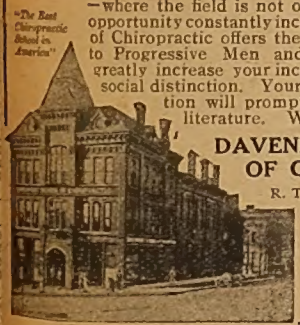

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Contents for First April, 1920, Issue

The Long Trail *A Complete Novel* . . . . . **J. Allan Dunn** 3

Through the newly broken Western trails, *John Clayborne* fights his way with *Fremont's* third expedition. Behind him he leaves a name that has been dishonored, and in the new country that is one day to be the State of California he seeks to forget the past in the pioneer's struggle for existence.

The Will to Go On . . . . . **Clyde B. Hough** 93

As good as dead, *Donaldson* struggles through the Alaskan blizzard. There is nothing in his pack save six thousand dollars' worth of gold-dust. His rifle is gone; his strength is gone; there is nothing left but the gold—and the will to go on.

Ten Thousand *Hectáreas* . . . . . **Farnham Bishop** 96

"Buy me five hundred Winchesters," says *Captain Kessler* to *Barstow*, "and I'll clear those San Blas Indians off your rubber concession." But in the Central American jungle *Barstow* meets *"Enrique Arcilla"*—*"Henry Clay"*—experiences a thrill felt by no man since the days of Balboa and finds that there are other things in life besides rubber concessions.

Such Bluff as Dreams Are Made Of . . . . . **R. T. M. Scott** 103

His business, as he defines it, is "dreams and crocodiles." And strangely enough when the rajah's bag of pearls is stolen from the Anglo-Indian steamer he is able to draw on his "business experience" to solve the mystery.

The Speck in the Apple . . . . . **G. A. Wells** 108

Never before in the history of the district had a policeman run away from danger, yet *John Mason* runs, leaving his club behind. But when he again faces a man with a knife he doesn't need his club.

Assisting Ananias . . . . . **W. C. Tuttle** 119

Ashburton De Puyster, heir to the *De Puyster* millions—ten millions to be exact—is missing. "Aha!" cries *"Chuck" Warner* of Piperock. "I'm *Ashburton*." And with *"Magpie" Simpkins* and *Ike Harper* as assistant liars he sets out to prove his claim.

Wild Blood *A Four-Part Story Part II* . . . . . **Gordon Young** 132

Davenant against *Hurricane Williams*. Civil war is brewing among the ship's company of the *Sally Martin*, en route to deal with *Grahame*, the pearler, on his island of Dakaru. Then comes the tornado, bringing a new factor into the situation. If you have not read the first part of this tale of the South Seas you will find it briefly retold in story form at the beginning of this instalment.

(Continued on next page)

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(*Continued from preceding page*)

Mercenary Ambitions . . . . . **James Ellsworth Noel** 162

Pete's first ambition—to own a ranch—isn't so mercenary. But his later ambition—to clean out *Roudy Perkins* at poker—decidedly is. Still, as his wife says, he learns that "gambling don't pay, and that's worth a good deal." Thus when things finally break right for him he can appreciate good fortune at its true worth.

Passenger by Freight . . . . . **Carl Clausen** 168

It's not nice of a ship-owner to fire a skipper just because the latter elopes with his daughter. That's why *Henry Travis* of San Francisco dismisses *Capt. Ben Lingle*, thereby unintentionally putting him on the road first to adventure and then to wealth.

The Camp-Fire **A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers, and adventurers** 177

Looking Ahead for Democracy 184

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 186

Ask Adventure 187

Firearms, Past and Present 188

Fishing in North America 188

Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . . **DeAlton Valentine**

Cover Design . . . . . **Hibbard V. B. Kline**

DAWN is striking against the snow-peaks of the Koh-i-Baba Range among the foot-hills of the Himalayas. It is the year of our Lord 1608, and of the Ox, by the Moslem calendar. A portentous dawn indeed for the beleaguered garrison of Khanjut—*Abdul Dost*, *Shirzad Mir*, the Englishman *Sir Ralph Weyand* and their followers. Not only must they hold off the besieging hosts of the Uzbek, *Jani Beg*, and of the Persian, *Shah Abbas*, but they must also show *Jahangir*, Mogul of India, that they, and not their opponents, are the Mogul's loyal friends. And despite the intrigues of the Portuguese, *Sir Ralph* must also obtain trade concessions for England. "Ameer of the Sea," by H. A. Lamb, a complete novel in the next issue.

DETECTIVES are not needed to ferret out a murderer in the cattle-country of Texas, for those who can't read road-signs and interpret the evidence as presented are few and far between; yet mistakes occur even there. "Road-Signs and a Nose-Ring," a complete novelette, by Barry Scobee, appearing in the Mid-April *Adventure*.

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Adventure

April 3, 1920

VOL. 25 NO. 1.

The Long Trail

A Complete Novel

by J. Allan Dunn

Author of "Salt of the Sea," "The Dragon's Claw," etc.

CHAPTER I

COUSINS

THE tall French windows of the paneled room were open to the Summer night, their curtains swaying lightly in the breeze that brought the perfume of magnolias, catalpas and jasmine to fight the reek of tobacco smoke and set the flames of the wax candles in the silver candelabra to flickering. Negro servants passed noiselessly about the table with decanters, refilling glasses and watching with rolling eyes the progress of the game. In front of each of the players were scatterings of gold and notes. In the center of the polished mahogan the stakes at issue were being arranged in tidy *rouleaux* and stacks by the only man not holding cards, a hunchback with a large and unusually handsome head set low between broad shoulders. The expression of his face was marred only by the malice of his eyes as they glanced alternately at the gamblers and marked the tense excitement of their features and the little tricks of gesture and of forced repression that bespoke the quality of the game.

The final hands were displayed. A chair or two was pushed back in chagrin amid ejaculations of disappointment and congratulation. The hunchback, with a sardonic grin, pushed over the winnings to the player at the head of the table, who received them nonchalantly.

"By the shade of Midas, Clayborne!" exclaimed one of the losers. "It's an unmannerly thing to invite us as guests and send us home paupers. You have the luck of the devil himself tonight."

"It's about time he came to my rescue, Beauvais," said Clayborne. "This is the first time I've won in six months. If I hold on to this, it goes to fend off the foreclosure that Mouton threatens me with tomorrow. I've a good mind to let him take the place and keep the money. It would be a pleasant change to have some to jingle."

"What would you do without Belle Rose?"

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"There's no money in the plantation. Or rather, I'm no planter. Scipio, brew a julep; the Madeira's too warming for a night like this."

A negro, magnificently proportioned, brave in a livery of blue broadcloth and gilt buttons, smiled at his master as he started to carry out the order.

"Save for the sentiment of the place," went on Clayborne, "I'd gladly let it go and join hands with Fremont. He starts within a few days for California."

"For California?"

"Yes. There's war brewing between us and Mexico. They say Great Britain wants California and that Mexico is inclined to throw it her way. We want it too. There are great harbors there, wonderful valleys—gold perhaps—something new, anyway. The Americans there are being harassed by the greasers. Fremont is to look the situation over. Our Pacific squadron may cooperate with him if trouble starts. We may annex it as a State. There should be fighting—fortune to follow. First the trip across the Rockies with Fremont and Carson—buffalo and Indians! The long trail of adventure! The thought has bitten deep into me."

"I thought you were well satisfied with Louisiana," said the hunchback in his silken voice that constantly held a bantering note. "Has anything gone wrong—save your fortune, which seems to be mending rapidly?"

Clayborne straightened a trifle in his chair.

"I do not quite grasp your meaning, Frank," he said, more politely than cordially.

The other shrugged his high shoulders.

"The Madeira must have dulled your wit. You know the saw? Lucky at cards *et cetera*, and you speak of leaving. But I trust you belie the proverb. And I trust I have not offended."

The speaker's eyes met Clayborne's gray and now cold glance composedly. His disfigurement was at once his armor and his license, and Clayborne was his host. The players uneasily tinkered with their stakes. One of them nervously shuffled the cards. To hint at introducing a lady's name at such an affair was not permissible. To bait Clayborne was dangerous—even for Frank Aubrey, jester.

"Ha-ha!"

A man laughed suddenly. His face was flushed with the wine he had been drinking and the losses he had suffered. For a moment his red tongue showed between his white teeth and his eyes crinkled in evident relish of the quip at the expense of Clayborne. His dress and his long black hair were in disorder. Through the lank strands of the latter, his ears stood out with an aggressive, bat-like prominence. As his dark eyes opened again, they tried to stare down Clayborne, who was looking at him with orbs that gleamed like steel. They faltered and he fumbled with the stem of his wine-glass.

"If the Madeira has dulled my wit, it seems to have sharpened yours, Philip," said Clayborne, very evenly. "Let us share your merriment."

"I was laughing at the thought of John Clayborne, exquisite Beau Brummell of the levées, riding a mustang through the prairies and skinning buffaloes. That was all, cousin, upon my honor. Scipio, you lazy rascal, where's the julep? And let's have fresh cards. These have been voodooed. I'll get them."

He rose from the table and, swaying a little, brought from the sideboard an inlaid box.

"Where is the key, John?" he asked. "Why do you keep the thing locked?"

"To prevent the servants from using them," answered his cousin. "But I doubt if there are any more packs."

"Yes, there are."

The other shook the box in confirmation. Clayborne tossed him a key-ring as the negroes prepared to serve the julep in fresh glasses. Philip Clayborne opened the casket and took out two decks of the same pattern as those already used, the maroon backs stamped in gold with the Clayborne crest. As he stripped them open and the rest sipped their liquor, the talk grew general.

"Talking of mustangs," said one, "they say the horse that Fremont brought back from his last trip is a beauty. A dappled gray, named Sacramento, given him by a Captain Sutter who has a rancho and a fort out there—a marvelous runner and jumper. Fremont wintered him at St. Louis with his Indians. Cadeau, the trapper, told me. He goes with Fremont."

"In shooting buffalo, they tell me," said another, "the horse turns half the trick. You ride alongside and fire from the saddle behind the hump."

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"Rare eating, those humps."

"Aye, and the tongues! Gad, if you go, Clayborne, I'll envy you!"

PHILIP CLAYBORNE had been whispering with his neighbor, a sulky youngster who had lost heavily and was now half stupid from wine and the blend of the julep. He seemed too dull to comprehend the sense of what was being told him.

"Watch, then," said Philip sharply in his low-pitched voice as he tossed the cards across the table. "The deal is with you, Harry." He lowered his voice again. "Wait till it comes your turn, Kellogg."

The game was resumed and, with every turn of the cards, John Clayborne won, and won heavily. With the urge of the juleps the play became heavy, even reckless, and all the stakes, save the host's, diminished steadily. When it came to Kellogg's deal, the latter's holdings were reduced to half a dozen coins. Philip jogged his elbow as he picked up the cards with clumsy, drunken fingers, dropping them and gathering them up again slowly as if his sense of touch was numb.

"Pass the deal if you can't handle it," said some one sharply, tense with the excitement of the play. The lad, for he was barely more, suddenly rose to his feet and flung the cards to the middle of the table.

"As I thought," he cried hoarsely. "The cards are marked! Pricked, I tell you! Feel for yourselves. Small wonder the luck was one-sided!"

A glass fell to the floor as John Clayborne started to his feet. Others stood up. Some picked up the cards, their faces changing as they fingered them. The hunchback leaned back, smiling, as he watched the rest. Philip leaned forward, looking at his cousin, his tongue-tip once more showing, like a fox in earth listening to baffled hounds.

One voice broke the silence.

"The lad's right! The cards are pricked! Clayborne!"

Back of Philip Clayborne's chair the eyes of the giant negro, Scipio, blazed, bloodshot. His big hands clutched spasmodically.

"Scipio."

The black glanced at his master, and his fingers relaxed, though his glance retained hatred and was still vigilant of Philip. The latter gave one swift glance across his shoulder and met the negro's baleful glare with a lift of his eyebrows in affected nonchalance.

"Gentlemen," said Clayborne, "these are my cards, of my own stock and pattern. How they became pricked I know not, but it was none of my doing. As to my luck, these winnings tonight are not a tenth of what I have lost to you in the past few weeks. I turn them over to you. Beauvais shall act as paymaster. The man who accuses me of cheating lies. Kellogg, I say you lie!"

Kellogg was up, his florid face paling a trifle.

"I bandy neither words nor bullets with knaves," he said. "The cards speak for themselves." A silence of assent followed. Clayborne, erect, challenging, eyed his company as, one by one, they turned from the table.

"Scipio," he said in a harsh voice, "bring these gentlemen their coats and hats and see that their horses are brought round."

Scipio left the room with those of the negroes who were body-servants to the guests. The silence held until he returned alone and, with the rest of Clayborne's servants, played valet. There was a look and a nod between him and his master and, at the end, Philip Clayborne found himself without his cloak and hat. The others left silently. Beauvais had taken up the money.

"I want a few moments with you, Philip," said John Clayborne, his voice frosty.

Philip started toward the door and Scipio placed himself in front of it with folded arms. He looked toward the windows and his cousin gave an order—

"Close all the windows and then go to your quarters!"

The negroes obeyed and filed out past Scipio, their back-rolling eyes showing white crescents as they went.

"Scipio, my pistols!"

Philip shrank back against the wall.

"I shall not fight you! I will not! It is plain murder! You are a dead shot!"

"I am not going to kill you. Fight me you shall. But, before that, I am going to tell you a few things. You have accomplished your purpose. You have seen me brought to practical beggary. Mouton will take over Belle Rose tomorrow. I know that he has advanced money, as your agent,

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beyond reasonable mortgage. You know that this means my disinheritance by our grandfather. You have ever envied me Belle Rose; you have been jealous of my betrothal to Lucille Brandon. That, too, will be dissolved. You have ever carried tales of my escapades and exaggerated them, though many of them you shared. I make no excuses for my down-slipping, but you, Philip, have ever been ready to grease the slide.

"You marked those cards and placed them in that box. Don't lie about it! You secured a copy of my key and placed them there. Long ago you prepared for this, filching two of the packs some night when the play was high and they would not be missed. I know there were but five packs in that box this morning. This afternoon you visited me, cousin, and waited for me in this room. We have broken seven packs.

"Load them, Scipio, so that my cousin may see them charged."

Scipio had laid upon the table a shallow box of mahogany, velvet lined, that held a pair of long-barreled, silver-mounted dueling-pistols with walnut stocks and grips, the grips gently curving to the hand. Wadding and caps, with a wooden ramrod, were in the case. He brought from the buffet a metal flask of powder and another of shining bullets. He let a few of the latter roll upon the polished table top, glancing maliciously at Philip, who gave an involuntary start at the sound of their contact with the wood. Then, with circumspect precision, he loaded the weapons.

"Choose, Philip! We will shoot across the length of the table."

"I tell you I will not fight you! I have seen you snuff a candle at ten paces!"

"I did not put it out. And, if I trim your stinking wick, it will not be for the lack of a fair encounter. Come, I will give you the first shot."

He picked up both pistols by their muzzle ends and advanced upon Philip, who retreated about the table. Scipio stood motionless as a statue of ebony, save for his eyes, that held derision.

Philip backed against a chair and halted, holding out shaking hands of protest.

"No, no! John, I will make amends! I——!"

"You lie again! Once away with a safe skin you would still lack the honor to face the music. If you signed a confession tonight you would swear tomorrow it was forced. You, a Clayborne! You fawning cur!"

He slapped his cousin across the cheek, lightly enough, yet the marks of fingers flamed out on Philip's face, to vanish in a flood of returning crimson. The craven hastily gulped down a full glass that stood at the chair-place. He reached out for one of the pistols.

"The first shot, you gave me the first shot! Remember that!"

Clayborne looked at him indifferently.

"I said so. Scipio, set the candles on the sideboard."

He walked to his end of the long table and stood there, his right arm hanging loosely by his side, pistol in hand. Philip, his hot face working, took place at the other end.

"Scipio will give the word, Philip. You can fire any time after 'three.' "

The candles threw a mellow light with soft shadows, fair to both. The negro took station by the door.

"One moment! If—if—" Philip licked his lips, dry despite the wine—"if I should do you harm, give an order for Scipio to see I have safe conduct."

John Clayborne's lips twitched contemptuously.

"That is my order, Scipio. Are you ready, Philip? Then count!"

"One—two——"

There seemed several seconds between the numbers. Philip's face grimaced with a sudden spasm, then straightened out as, on "two," he slowly raised his pistol, elevating it until the muzzle angled higher than his opponent's head, slowly depressing it until it held, wavered a little——

"Three!"

The pistol spat. There was a curling wisp of smoke from the emptied barrel, an acrid tang of powder-gas, with Philip's face, pale again, staring across the mahogany for a split-second, then swiftly descending as he dropped to his knees, the pistol fallen, his finger-tips clutching the table's edge, the distorted features showing plain above the rim before they disappeared behind the protection.

John Clayborne's face was serene, unmoved, untouched. John Clayborne's pistol swung up and down, then barked. And Philip writhed on the floor, blood streaming

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from one of those bat-ears of his, punctured through the upper cartilage.

"You are notched, cousin, where you can not hide it," said John Clayborne. "Tell what tale you may, you will know what it stands for long after you are done with sleeping on your left side—the split-ear of a rogue! Give him his things, Scipio, and see him mounted. You may come back tomorrow, Philip, with Mouton. I shall not be here."

CHAPTER II

SCIPIO GIVES A RECEIPT

THE sun was sucking rainbow mists from the river as Scipio, leading a mare whose skin shone like satin, walked up and down by the levee that held back the wilful Mississippi from the lands of Belle Rose plantation.

Strawberry roan was La Belle Rose, named after the place of her birth, and her well-groomed body held the hue of young rosewood. One white stocking had La Belle Rose and a white blaze, shaped like the blade of an arrow, that started in the broad space between her luminous eyes of blending brown and blue and ended between her sensitive nostrils lined with a membrane soft as the inner petals of a rose. Well-barreled, deep of chest, arched of neck, springy of pastern was she, with flowing mane and tail that, against wind and sun, showed like living flame.

She snuffed the air and snorted; she nibbled at Scipio's shoulder and tossed her dainty head when he affected to chide her, glancing occasionally and expectantly toward the mounting-block in front of the mansion of Belle Rose, its white façade with the pillared portico faintly pink in the rays of the lifting sun.

The mare's blood ran too hotly and too swiftly for tie-rope and halter when there was journeying in prospect. To her every trip was an adventure and she sensed that there was something unusual in the wind today. She carried the saddle with the holsters for pistols and for carbine, and that meant traveling far afield with the master who sat so firmly and so closely, with such a knowledge of her moods and capacity, with such a resolute yet plastic hand to the reins, that his mounting seemed to make her a more wonderful being than before.

Scipio's broad shoulders were well back, his tread, unvexed by shoe, unmarred by rising heel, was springy; his broadened nostrils also snuffed the air and the light of adventure was in his eyes. Negro he was, son of a Masai chieftain, sprung from warrior loins, one generation from a race of matchless, ownerless fighters. Today his chief, the white man to whom he gave fealty and affection, was to take the Long Trail and he —and he alone—was to go with him. His lungs swelled with deep breaths until his ribs showed like the bars of a cage under the light shirt he wore.

The mare suddenly whinnied, shrill and clear as a trumpet, and Scipio halted, stroking her neck. A negro on a mule was riding toward them at an amble; the man slumped in the saddle with no more grace than a stuffed sack, the white teeth gleaming between coarse, thick lips; his wool showing through a rent in his wide-rimmed straw; the stirrups caught between prehensile toes.

Scipio led La Belle Rose to the horse-rail and tethered her. Then he advanced to meet the newcomer, who had dismounted, leaving the mule to graze on the short-clipped grass. Cudjo of Brandon Hall looked up at the superior height and bulk of Scipio with malicious, envious eyes, set in a bushman's face. He was a negro of West African swamps, born of generations of slavish tribes forced to the marshy coasts by the more vigorous race, long before the slave-ships of America deported them to comparative luxury and freedom on the plantations of the Southern States.

His long arms hung to his knees, like an ape's, with half-developed thumbs. His bowed legs looked the more ridiculous in their pantaloons of striped canvas reaching midway between his shiny calves and unarched slab-feet. He took a little package and a letter from the crown of his disreputable hat and, with a bow of impudence, tendered them to Scipio.

"Dem's from Missy Brandon, Scipio," he said; " 'tended fo' youah massa, Misteh Clayborne. 'Pears like you-all was stahtin' somewheres? I reckon you-all an' me-all ain't gwine meet up agen, Scipio."

His grin stretched clear across his face. Scipio made no immediate answer. He sensed what was in the package—the engagement ring and other jewelry that Lucille Brandon was returning to John Clayborne. The story of the game and its dramatic

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ending had no doubt spread swiftly, and Lucille Brandon had lost no time in showing her disdain. Cudjo, through the freemasonry of plantation servants, knew what was in the packet; guessed what was in the letter. The choosing of this least reputable of the Brandon slaves for messenger was an added, needless insult.

Scipio's brown face turned a dull crimson, but the fatuous Cudjo, rejoicing at a chance to humiliate the aloof major-domo of Belle Rose, failed to notice the flying of the danger signal.

"Do you want a receipt?" asked Scipio. He could both read and write, and Cudjo twinged at the hinted superiority.

"They ain't gwine to be no answer to that letteh," he said sneeringly. "Reckon they ain't gwine ter be no mo' corresponsin' 'tween Belle Rose an' Brandon. No sah, not fo' a li'l while. I wish you-all good-by and good luck, Scipio."

He stretched out a pinkish, wrinkled palm and Scipio gripped it. The eyes of the Masai were blazing now, and Cudjo regretted his forwardness.

"Better you take a receipt, Cudjo," said Scipio grimly. "I won't trouble to write one—on papeh. Show yo' clothes w'en you get home an' they'll know Scipio got the packet. I 'low the ink on that receipt 'll likely be still wet."

He drew the writhing Cudjo smartly to him, side-stepping as he jerked him forward, twisting the Brandon negro's arm into the small of his own back and transferring the grip to his left hand. His right arm caught Cudjo back of the knees; he swept him up into his embrace, then flung him, arms and legs outspread, twitching like a frog, clear across the levee into the yellow water of the river. He gave the disgusted mule a slap on the flank that sent it galloping down the road, and picked up package and letter from the top of the horse-rail where he had placed them for safety, just as John Clayborne, equipped for riding, came out of his front door.

CHAPTER III

BASIL LAJEUNESSE

THE spirit of the man of twenty-six—according to those of twice that age and upward who look back through the telescope of the years—rebounds easily from adversity when that spirit is truly manly, never giving a backward step, eager to lunge forward at the first opening.

But to John Clayborne that opening had not come. His spirit, lacking nothing that a man's should possess, was numb with disaster and disgrace that could not be controverted, though unmerited.

Perhaps the return of his gifts from Lucille Brandon depressed him most. His own follies he freely paraded in his mind and acknowledged, but he had lost in one disaster his good name, his fiancée and the last opportunity for keeping Belle Rose out of the hands of the usurers, hands he strongly suspected were upheld and guided by his cousin, who now would lay suit to the Brandon heiress.

As for the plantation, the smug moneylender Mouton was doubtless already in possession. It was his helplessness that galled him. Fortune, seeming to smile, had trapped him. His peers had judged him and, however light was that judgment, the stain of it would stick until some unprecedented reversal should turn the tide of public opinion, now flowing strongly against him.

The prospect of the trip with Fremont was a forlorn hope. It did not exhilarate him with any measure of elasticity. The attractiveness of the adventure lay only in its nature of offering desperate opportunities of peril in which he might find oblivion, if not forgetfulness.

So he felt, as the steamer *Louisville* swung up the wide and shallowing river at sunset, toward the high bluff set with picturesque Spanish houses—Baton Rouge—soon to be the capital of Louisiana. They were only seventy miles above Belle Rose landing, but an overheated and perverse bearing had delayed them, much to the disgust of the captain, with the boat of a rival line close behind them eager to break the record of the *Louisville*.

It was a typical Mississippi sunset, the western sky aglare with masses of sulfur-colored clouds backed by a blue that, in the complementary juxtaposition of hues, seemed violet. As the sun sank, the yellow vapors turned to orange, then to salmon. The grizzly pilot, going to his post to take the steamer up to Baton Rouge landing, cocked a wise eye at the flaming marvel.

"Fine weather," he opined. "Sailors' good luck. Much to get ashore here, captain?"

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"Not much, suh, fo' which I am duly grateful, we bein' behind, an' the *Orleans* burnin' all —— to pass us. We'll snatch up the passengehs—there are three booked —and swing out again, if you please, suh."

"Suits me," said the pilot, a slab-sided Missourian. "I don' aim to have Betts on the *Orleans* crowin' when we make Natchez or, mebbe, Vicksburg."

He turned to his duties; the *Louisville* slowly swung in toward the shore, transversing the current, while the call of the man taking the soundings of the uncertain channel came intermittently—

"By the mark, twain—and a half—twain—twain it stays."

Dusk was settling down as the light freight was hustled ashore by the roustabouts. Two passengers came aboard—a woman and her colored maid. The captain peered down from the wheelhouse impatiently, then called to the mate:

"Cast off! We can't wait! We're too late now!"

As he spoke, Clayborne, standing on the upper deck looking down to where Scipio had spread out the mare's supper on a clean sack, after having gone ashore for sweet water from the landing scuttle-butt served by a living spring, heard the *whooo-oo-hooh* of another steamer and saw the smoke, sepia in the twilight, puffing up from her smoke-stack, though the boat was still hidden by the trees that clothed the bend.

The mate broke into a volley of oaths.

The negroes rushed up and down like black ants, hauling in the gangway and casting off the loops of the hempen cables from the snubbing-posts. The *Louisville* gave three toots of departure as her paddle-wheels revolved and churned the turbid water. From the *New Orleans*, just poking her nose around the bend, came hoarse, challenging blasts as the plume of smoke from her funnel grew larger, sparks dancing in a flare under the writhing vapor. The *Louisville* sheered into the stream while the firemen attacked the woodpile and recklessly flung billets into the gaping furnace.

Lights were twinkling on the bluff and also on the landing. Down the gray ribbon of road that led to the latter, Clayborne saw the agile figure of a man running at top speed, carrying under one arm a long bundle. He came bounding to the edge of the wharf without a check until he set foot on the string-piece and hurled his baggage across the widening gap between the steamer and the shore. The distance was full two fathoms, Clayborne estimated, and increasing rapidly.

The man turned back, took some rapid strides, wheeled and returned in great leaps, then literally flung himself across the creaming eddies. The rail section that had been removed for handling the freight was not yet replaced, and the negroes held it while they stared with open mouths and white-circled eyes at the flying stranger, who landed fairly among them, stooped, held his balance, rose laughingly erect, retrieved his bundle and made his way to the cabin-deck. The mare had started at this meteoric arrival and the man, arrived beside Clayborne, turned to look down on her where Scipio at her head was stroking her nose and whispering in her ear.

"A good horse, that, and a good nigger," he said in French to Clayborne. "I wish I owned them."

Clayborne was not beyond all courtesy to an advance so ingenuous.

"I do, "he answered. "At least I own the mare. The man I intend to free."

The stranger nodded but said nothing. Anti-slavery talk was already abroad, but the subject was not popular and was likely to lead to controversy. He sat on a bench and, by the light from a cabin window, drew from his bundle of canvas a rifle cased in buckskin, the edges fringed. He uncovered the weapon and looked it over carefully for scratches before he replaced it.

"She is my good wife, this carbine," he said.

It was a trapper's weapon and Clayborne surveyed the man more closely until the latter, satisfied his rifle was unhurt, sought the purser and the cabin he had so closely gained.

The *New Orleans* came opposite the landing but showed no signs of making it. Either she was lucky in having no business there or her captain thought the beating of the *Louisville* more important. Foot by foot she gained, so slowly she seemed to crawl, though the wash from the wheels of the *Louisville*, surging back to join the wake, and the spray at the bow of the *New Orleans*, showed them both at top speed.

Fire was vomiting from both funnels; wood was thrown in as fast as it could be

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crammed. Pine knots and resinous boughs, held for such emergencies, made the whole boat quiver with the struggle of the steam they produced. The blacks, with a continuous fusillade of cursing, labored in an inferno of heat, of ruddy, burning flares, leaping shadows that swallowed up their own shifting silhouettes.

From a burst of speed that made her draw away from her rival for a few exultant minutes, the *Louisville* slackened, laboring hard, fighting through a welter of water that seemed striving to hold her back. The *New Orleans* came up with whistles tooting derision, her cabins a blaze of light; crew and passengers, cheering and gibing, lining her starboard side until she tipped to half her freeboard. Her paddles sounding like cataracts, she came up even—wheel-box to wheel-box with the rival captains exchanging anything but pleasantries. Her stern crept ahead, then swung at last into mid-channel as the *Louisville* lagged and lagged behind.

THE *Louisville's* captain came storming to the engine-room where the great walking beam see-sawed vehemently.

"To —— with your bearings!" he cried. "Give me speed! Chuck in some oil! Throw in a barrel of the stuff! Do you know what they are going to call us when they reach Natchez? Betts coined it on his paddle-box, —— him! The '*Mud Turtle!*' That's what we'll be called up and down the river while there's a plank to our keel! And Betts getting his bonus for beating us. Throw in oil, I tell you!"

"She'll blow up if ye do, or start something! Dinna talk like a fule, captain!"

The latter, autocrat and arbiter absolute aboard his craft, foamed in his beard and glared at the Scotch engineer. He made a movement toward his belt, one-sided, for his hand stayed beneath his coat. When he spoke, his voice was cold and contained.

"You'll do as I order, McPherson," he said. "Or ——"

He did not finish his sentence but turned to two sweating negroes, naked to their canvas pantaloons, and savagely ordered them to bring a keg of oil. The engineer made one last remonstrance.

"I'll not be responsible," he muttered, "for the machinery or the lives aboard the boat."

"I'm responsible, —— you," replied the captain. "In with it!"

Instantly there was a belch of flame and a frightful roar, flung back and redoubled from the bluffs between which they were passing. The fire-door catapulted among the yelling, crisping blacks and the fire-box, like a volcano, spewed a torrent of burning embers and flaring gas. The boat rocked with the explosion; the decks lifted; shattered glass tinkled down and, as flames seemed to start everywhere at once on the after-deck, a screaming confusion started.

Clayborne, still aloof, gazing moodily down in the cargo space, saw the mare rear, her forelegs tucked, her haunches strenuous, her body blood-red in the sudden glare. He saw Scipio spring toward her head, then check himself as La Belle Rose leaped the rail and, swimming powerfully, made for the shore, the black after her, clinging to her mane, coaxing her—a vivid picture that vanished in the dark.

The stranger was at Clayborne's side, alert, carbine in hand, pistols at his belt.

"Have you got weapons?" he queried. "Then get them. The engines have gone through her bottom, they say. We're between fire and water and those black devils 'll have the boats away if we don't stop them."

Clayborne's cabin was close at hand and he thrust a vigorous way through a mob of passengers calling on their God for a miracle, gained his weapons and returned.

"There are four boats," he told the stranger. "Four, for this mob! I'll take the starboard side if you'll handle this."

He raced around the main-deck structure, up which flames were licking greedily. The mate was at the forward boat, striking right and left at maddened men, white and black alike. Negroes were climbing up from the lower deck like flies. One of them slashed at the falls with a long knife. Clayborne yelled at him and caught his bloodshot gaze, leveling a pistol at him.

"Stop that!" he shouted. "Stop or I'll fire! The boat's inside the davits!"

The crazed African gibbered at him like a bayed baboon. His syllables were indistinguishable above the shouts of the mêlée and the steady crackle of the fire. But he severed another rope, in his frenzy fortunately attacking the slack, though Clayborne did not see this. The pistol spat and the negro, shot through both jaws as he

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repulged too late, fell backward with a yell
the river. For a second the crowd hung
me k, and Clayborne clubbed his way to
lou boat.

"There are women aboard!" he shouted.
am ring them forward! Not a man in the
re- at till the women are placed!"

He hitched turns of the shortened slack
out the davit cleats, setting down his
fle where he could stand on it and tucking
ie discharged pistol in his waistband with
s loaded fellow, swinging the bow of the
adequate boat outward. The Scotch
ngineer, his beard scorched off, his hands
aw with burns, broke through to handle
he stern. Three women were thrust forward.

A phalanx of frantic blacks came charging along the deck. Their leader swung a heavy bar of wood.

"Stand back, white man!" he yelled. "Stan' back or I'se gwine to brain yo'!"

Clayborne whipped out his second pistol, fired, and the giant dropped in his tracks, a crimson star between his eyes. Clayborne gripped the muzzle of his weapon and felled the next man with the butt, stooping swiftly for his rifle. A blow descended on him from behind, a glancing stroke that fell from head to shoulder, and he dropped, conscious only of a rush of feet and the hoarse cry of the engineer.

When he came to, the boat was gone, the deck almost clear, with the figures of men jumping from the upper rail of the doomed steamer. The deck houses were all ablaze, the funnel had sagged and the fire roared like a blast furnace, the leaping flames beneath their canopy of smoke tingeing the distant shore with vermilion.

Clayborne struggled to his feet, finding his right arm almost helpless, clutched at the lower netting of the rail, dragged himself across the wooden rim and toppled into the river back of the silent paddle-wheel. He glimpsed three boats, deep-laden, pulling to land, the reddened flood dotted with heads and lifting arms where swimmers made their way to safety. He struck out feebly, borne down with the current. A steamer tooted vigorously—the *New Orleans* backing down the channel in which she could not turn, still out of sight but sounding a belated rescue.

He swam clumsily with his one sound arm and strove, with ebbing strength, to make his way out of the tide. A balk of timber, charred and sputtering, flaked with fire, struck and submerged him. Twice he went under and fought his way back to the surface. His senses began definitely to fail him; sight, hearing, even the touch of the water seemed unreal—a struggle against a solid rather than an elastic, yielding medium.

He made an effort to turn upon his back and plunged under again, his mouth filling with water that pressed its way to his lungs, choking him until, in one last thrashing turmoil of resistance, his head bobbed out into the air. He gulped some strength-giving, life-sustaining measure of oxygen before he sank again to lips and nose, trying to float, will gone, his attempts automatic.

There was a shout that broke through his coma—a tumult in the water, a dim bulk outlined by foam and Scipio's voice calling encouragement. His arm was clutched and then his own desperate fingers gripped coarse, long hair, the mane of La Belle Rose. Scipio swam easily beside him, sustaining him at the armpit, and the mare lunged on gallantly across the current to slack water.

"Take it easy, suh," said Scipio. "There's a sandy bottom at the foot of the bluff yondeh—sand-bah jus' ahead of us."

The mare's fore-hoofs found bottom and she pawed her way out on the firm-packed bar, Clayborne still clinging weakly to her mane. The *New Orleans* was steaming at quarter-speed, barely holding her own against the current, a cable's length from the *Louisville*. The burning steamer was now one spout of flame that suddenly turned to hissing steam as the water flooded her at last, and she sank to her upper works while the boats of the *New Orleans* rowed swiftly here and there, picking up the swimmers before attention was paid to the survivors who had reached land and were huddled under the bluff, awaiting transportation.

A man strode forward to meet the white man, the black and the snorting horse. He put a friendly arm about Clayborne's shoulder and Clayborne recognized the stranger who had helped to keep back the mob from the boats.

"Take a sip of this," said the man and raised a flask to Clayborne's lips.

The clean, good liquor sent new life through his veins.

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"I was afraid you had gone down," said the other, "and here you are with horse and man. Thank the good God for that, *monsieur!*"

Clayborne, revivified, strengthened, gave his thanks and name.

"Mine," said the other, "is Basil Lajeunesse. We should be comrades after this, for, look you, I think we have saved a life or two. Alas, I have lost my good wife, my carbine! She lies in the river, to rust. Ah, well! Finish the flask, my friend. And there is a man here who has dry and excellent tobacco. We are not altogether luckless. And here come the boats. They will take us to Natchez at any rate."

CHAPTER IV

LAJEUNESSE TALKS

NATCHEZ, still rebuilding from the effects of the tornado four years before, received them hospitably, and Clayborne and his new comrade found lodging at the home of a wealthy cotton-planter who would not be denied. Scipio and the mare went with them. They speedily found themselves heroes, to the amusement of Lajeunesse and the chagrin of Clayborne. The latter wanted to get on to St. Louis to get in touch with Fremont.

He needed refitting after the loss of the steamer—weapons, clothes, a cob horse for Scipio; even his pistols had disappeared during the fight and the swim ashore. He had some means left, the jewels returned by the Brandon heiress. He had those on his person when the fire started. He had meant to toss them in the river but now he was forced to sell them for equipment.

This matter, slight in itself, helped to keep him self-centered, broody over his troubles, and only the light-hearted animation of Lajeunesse saved Clayborne from being considered churlish. Lajeunesse! He was rightly named "Youth," thought Clayborne. The same age, the Frenchman seemed years the younger, save for an air of achievement that underlay his somewhat flippant gaiety. He sang, he danced, he joked and told a rollicking tale with a flamboyance of spirit that was irresistible, and he perpetually rallied Clayborne.

"Name of a cupid, but you, my friend, take yourself too seriously!" he would cry. "Here are smiles for you from soft, submissive lips and you heed them not, challenges from eyes alert, yet languishing, and you, my cabbage, are blind! Were I not a foresworn bachelor, I, Basil Lajeunesse, voyager, therefore perforce fickle, with my good wife, my carbine, rusting, alas, in Mississippi mud, would choose me one of these fair ladies who lift the chin at me and settle down in Natchez town.

"But beauty fades and a running brook was never intended by nature for a mill-pond. I must flow on for ever, until I reach the sea."

There was a touch of mysticism in both phrase and voice that held Clayborne for a moment. Then he smiled.

"You are a butterfly, Basil," he said.

"I? A butterfly? Name of a folly, no! A bee, John, say a bee! A honey-gatherer, if you will, but no drone. A bee with business. What would you? A man must pluck the hour. This is my holiday. Am I to blame that I confine myself not to one single bloom, but wander round the garden where there is a score of hues and perfumes?

"I do no harm; I am a dispenser of favors. To get out of life all the pleasure I may without hurting any one, there is my motto. And it is a fair game and no favor. Diana knows; the ladies have their weapons and when they throw down the glove beware! The most innocent appearing wears coat-armor. It is a two-sided dalliance. Marry I can not; it would not be right. With me, 't would be putting a wild bird in a cage. He stops singing the song of his heart and, in exchange for liberty, is taught tricks. So I see it.

"But you, my friend, are too serious and therefore likely to be limed. I am the lover of the sun, the wind, the prairie, the river and the mountains, of what lies back of the sunset. *Moi, je suis un voyageur!*"

He broke off to hum a gay little refrain—

"'*J'aime la princesse lointaine.*'"

Then he caught the shadow on Clayborne's face and turned to apology.

"If I have hurt you, my friend, with my light talk?"

Clayborne turned it off, but the last sentence of his friend's speech had stirred the rancor on his heart to fresh bitterness. He had been "limed" indeed. He had worshiped Lucille Brandon, Southern aristocrat and reigning beauty, as Pygmalion worshiped his statue, Galatea, before she

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came to life and proved his dreams true. Clayborne had invested Lucille with all the attributes he held ideal, weighing lack of response against a virginal pride and modesty. Now, with the feet of his goddess revealed as clay, all women seemed to him venomous. But, though there were not lacking opportunities, he would not endeavor to revenge himself upon the sex. He still held fast to his own standards.

"'A woman's love is like a gem,'" quoted Lajeunesse softly, "'but the love of man for man is as fine gold.'"

Clayborne threw off his mood.

"You have comrades?" he asked. "Friends of the wind and sun, like yourself? Voyagers?"

"*Voyageurs du bois et de la rivière!* Rovers all, yet wanderers to a purpose, under a gallant chief. Challengers of the unknown! Men of Fremont the Pathfinder!"

Clayborne stood agape.

"You know Fremont? You travel to join him?"

"Of a truth! Why not? Do I know Fremont? Ask him! Ask Carson, gallant Kit! Ask Godey! Was I not with him on the first, on the second expedition and do I not now go on the third? Fremont! There is a man for you and, name of an eagle, what an eye! The beak of a hawk, the courage of a Spring she-bear, tough as a timber wolf and wise as the leader of a flock of southing swans!"

The eulogy came from the heart, and Clayborne warmed to it. This was the sort of man to take the trail with. He came out of his shell.

"I am for the West, myself," he said. "For the far West, the land behind the sunset. I am on my way to join Fremont. As soon as I can get weapons and other equipment and buy a horse for my man."

He thought Lajeunesse looked quizzically at him as he scratched his head and stuck out his full lower lip.

"You have been chosen for the third expedition?" asked the Frenchman.

"Not chosen, but I think there will be small difficulty about my joining the party," answered Clayborne, conscious of speaking a bit stiffly.

Lajeunesse shrugged his volatile shoulders.

"That must be between you and the captain," he said. "Where will you join him?"

"I had thought at St. Louis," said Clayborne. "I had understood he would pass through there."

"Couldn't very well help it," said Lajeunesse. "My friend—" he hesitated—"though you may no longer wish to call me friend after I finish," he said half whimsically, "Fremont is averse to having those with him whom he considers gentlemen-adventurers. I have heard him speak strongly on the subject," he added with a reminiscent smile.

"You see," he went on, "there is a trade to be learned in voyaging. Every man must fit in; we may travel only as fast as the slowest, or abandon him. Each has his task and, unless he performs it as an expert, there is more delay and vexation. Fremont starts late this year. We must make the passes before the snow lies deep, and he is impatient of unnecessary halts. It is not enough, my friend, to be able to ride, to shoot and have a brave heart.

"Fremont, with his sextants, his chronometers and his transit, maps our path; Kit Carson is our guide; Maxwell our chief hunter; yet the rest of us must know where to look for water, for feed, must be able to judge the lay of the land, read Indian signs and the trail of what we kill for food. We must have learned the ways of Indians and the habits of the buffalo and deer; each must be able to rope his horse, to fell a tree, to make a raft or a boat, to swim a torrent, to light a fire in all weathers, to cook, to talk Indian sign, to endure starvation, cold and heat and thirst—and it must be known to Fremont that we can do all these things.

"Most of us are French, Creoles or Canadians—men of the plains, the rivers and the woods, bred to our calling. Fremont knows our faults and our virtues. He chooses for this trip those who have been with him before. And we know him and render him strict obedience. He is a soldier and we live by rule. There are strict duties set down and sharp lines of avoidance. It is not all who would wish to conform to such regulations. Ah, you will pardon me, my friend?"

"I lack many of these requirements, without doubt," said Clayborne, a cloud on his face, "yet I daresay I should not lag behind nor fail to do my share."

"I do not seek to dissuade you, I but try to save you disappointment," said

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Lajeunesse. "There are other things. You spoke of buying a horse for your man. We ride cayuses that are born in the West, that know how to gallop at top speed and avoid the holes the prairie-dogs dig, that can travel fifty miles if need be, graze on sage-brush and be fresh in the morning, that can drink bitter water and not founder. There are no oats nor warm stalls in the wilderness."

"So then," rejoined Clayborne bitterly, "spirit and mettle in man or horse do not suffice for pioneering? I have heard differently. I do not agree with you. Let us change the subject a little. Do you join your leader in St. Louis?"

HE WAS disappointed and unconvinced. He did not think himself the lesser man of the two and he was determined to go West to a new country. His personal pride would not allow him to accept himself at the low valuation Lajeunesse appeared to rate him.

Had not the pioneers of the wilderness, from the Mexican Gulf to the frozen seas of the far north, been aristocrats? De Soto, Frontenac, Cadillac, what had they known of the conditions of the unknown lands they had conquered? Soldiers, aristocrats and priests had won through the wilderness; why not Clayborne, whose own ancestors had been fighting men and pioneers of their time?

"I join him in St. Louis, yes," said Basil, keen to divert Clayborne from his mood of feeling slighted. "But the grand rendezvous is at Bent's Fort, beyond the border, where the Mexicans are neighbors with the Indians. It is on the Arkansas River near where it joins the stream of *La Fontaine qui Bouit.* How we trail there from St. Louis is not certain. On the first trip we followed the Kansas River from the Missouri and then struck west across the Santa Fé Trail, through the Pawnee country. From St. Louis we poled up the Missouri to the Kansas in a *bateau,* ten miles up the Kansas to Chouteau's Landing, twenty days for getting the outfit ready and the horses used to grass and then—ho for the open prairie!

"As Fremont said, it was as if a ship had left the sea and taken a land voyage. All of us armed and mounted, eight carts with two mules to each, four oxen! And we had a rubber boat! *Lo! 'cré Dieu!* Shall I forget the first time we used it? It was at a ford of the Kansas that we must cross, a hundred miles from its mouth, late in the afternoon and the river yellow and angry as the mad Missouri itself. I swim across with a line, and all goes well until too much is loaded in the boat for a last trip. *Hélas!* It is upset and, in a moment, we are all in that flood, from which we rescue much and lose much—sugar and, worst of all, a bag of coffee! Figure to yourself how we mourned that bag of coffee!

"But this time we strike farther south. We are to pass the lower end of Great Salt Lake. We go to California, then north to the country of the Klamath Indians, wilder and fiercer than any Pawnee."

He talked on, striving to entertain Clayborne, and the latter, more than a match for Lajeunesse in such finesse, drew from him a graphic account of what befell such challengers of the wild and how they bore themselves. The tale thrilled him and did not dishearten. What one had done another could accomplish, he told himself again.

"Why not voyage directly up the Arkansas from the Mississippi?" he questioned. "It is navigable, is it not?"

"Up to Grand River, five hundred miles, to Muskogee, where there are two feet of water for eight months and four the rest of the year. Beyond that I know not the river, but there are settlements and trails. It is a shallow stream after it leaves the mountains through the steep-walled cañon, as the Spanish call the deep passes. And, lower down, it travels like a dog fresh from the leash, or like a snake gone crazy; in bends and loops with fresh channels for every flood. It might be done, but Fremont will choose his own path and, at Bent's Fort,* Carson comes up from Taos, for he has promised, and Carson never breaks his word to friend or enemy."

"What kind of weapons do you use?" asked Clayborne casually. "Like the carbine that you lost?"

"For my choice, carrying balls thirty-eight to the pound, long-barreled, with the butts incurved to the shoulder like Turkish guns. There are none better. Good for Indian, deer and buffalo, fired from foot or saddle. Eh, I tire you. I talk too much. But it is the great life. Look you, my friend,

* Near the site of Pueblo, Colorado; probably some seventy miles down-river from the present city.

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I have seen you in action. If you will, I will speak to the colonel. He is my friend as well as my commander. And it is the great life!" And he hummed—

"Gai, gai, avancons nous!"

Clayborne had learned what he had wanted. And he had made up his mind. He and Scipio, equipped *"comme voyageur,"* with La Belle Rose and a cayuse, whatever species of horse that might be, would be on hand at Bent's Fort to present themselves as cadets for Fremont's expedition. There, on the border, he could hardly be esteemed a tenderfoot.

The rendezvous was set for the early part of August. It was the end of June. He had forty days in which to make the trip to where the Arkansas joined the stream of *La Fontaine qui Bouit.* It would go hard if he could not accomplish that. And he resolved to leave the Mississippi at the delta of the Arkansas and join some one of the trading boats that adventured up the latter river.

Such gathered at Natchez-under-the-Hill, the lawless collection of shacks, taverns and drinking houses, where the rivermen and trappers joined for their strenuous carousals after long and dangerous labors. He made the proposal to Lajeunesse that they visit the place that night, and the gay Frenchman, ever seeking excitment, eagerly consented.

"I am tired of playing the fine gentleman," he said. "I must go up-river by the steamer *Baton Rouge* tomorrow—you, I hope, with me. Tonight we will leave our manners behind us and mix with men who may lack certain civilities, but who live the faster and the harder because they gamble every hour with their lives as forfeit for a misplay.

"We shall excuse ourselves from piquet and the tinkling piano. Sighs are sweet but a good round oath is music to my ears. A bugle is better than a harp. Life at Natchez-under-the-Hill is like the little stream at Bent's Fort; it boils. You shall see there some of my sort—voyagers, Creoles, as myself, or Canadians, fur-hunters, timbermen, boatmen and pilots. It will be strange company for you, perhaps, but, if they are rough, they are solid, though unpolished; they are not veneered, but hard-grained from bark to heart. *Voilà!* Let us go!"

CHAPTER V

UNDER THE HILL

THE mention of the steamer *Baton Rouge* sped the determination of Clayborne to depart from Natchez as soon as possible, but not by that boat. The reasons were strong ones. The news of his discredit would be spreading fast, and it was quite probable that some one on the *Baton Rouge* might be the first to bring it north.

As John Clayborne of Belle Rose plantation, affianced to Lucille Brandon, he was a person of consequence and of natural note. As a man accused of cheating at cards, the cast-off lover of a girl who evidently believed the story, he would be a person of unenviable notoriety. He felt ill at ease in accepting the hospitality of the Natchez planter, knowing that the latter might feel Clayborne had abused it when he heard the scandal that Clayborne might deny but could not disprove.

One thing he did before the night fell and that was to take steps to free Scipio, since they were not to go to St. Louis. The lawyer drew the papers to be completed with the necessary formalities the following morning.

He also took leave of his host and, sending regrets to the family, had Scipio, before the evening meal, take his few possessions and the mare to a hostelry nearer the river, thus avoiding *adieux* that might be looked upon later as embarrassing. He left a note for Lajeunesse to meet him at the steamer-landing at nine o'clock, earlier than which hour, Basil had informed him, Natchez-under-the-Hill would be dull as ditch-water.

He was moody and he wanted to be away from the volatile Frenchman for a few hours. Joining Scipio, he mounted the mare, restive from lack of exercise, and rode along the bluffs by the river, getting a meal for himself with water and a light feed for his horse at the cabin of a ferryman, and returning to town and the river tavern after dark. He handed over the mare to Scipio for grooming and bade the latter be ready to accompany him to his appointment. Until the freedom-papers were sworn to, he did not intend to mention them again to the black; neither did Scipio refer to them.

"If you are goin' down to Natchez-under-the-Hill," said the Masai, whose dialect

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was less pronounced, a better imitation of his master's accent than the vast proportion of the negroes, "betteh you buy you some pistols, suh! Thet's suah a desp'rit outfit gathehs down by the riveh. It's no place fo' quality. The lickeh is bad an' the gamblin' all one-sided. If a man should happen to win they don' let him take none away with him. An', if he gets 'streperous, they jest natcherly pounds all the senses clean out of him an' feeds him to the catfish."

"I'll take care of myself, Scipio," said Clayborne. "I'll have you handy if things get too obstreperous. Besides, I'm not going alone. Better give the mare a warm mash and watch her till she finishes. We'll start at fifteen minutes before ten."

Scipio watched him out of sight with an impassive countenance and reserved his open thought for the benefit of the mare when he sat in her stall watching her eat. As he talked and the mare listened with one silken ear cocked back, Scipio felt the edge of a long-bladed knife with a buckhorn handle and, satisfied with his inspection, slid it to where the keen, tapering point fitted into a little socket of leather fastened at the crossing of his suspenders, the knife lying between his muscled shoulders and held in place by the vest he would keep buttoned until the time came for action. Ordinarily Scipio carried his weapon in a belt-scabbard, well to the rear, but his fears of Natchez-under-the-Hill were not idle ones.

"No place for quality folks, lady-hawss," he muttered. "On'y one thing good 'bout thet place. Niggehs is 'lowed to stan' aroun' in the same room 'long they mastehs. An' I'm certain goin' to stan' roun' handy. Misteh Clayborne he act same as if he was conjuahed eveh since thet night. He got a look in his eyes like he don' care what goin' happen to him.

"If it's 'count thet Brandon lady, why he jest don' know w'en he's well off, fo' she's plain biggity! Jes' think of one thing—herself, way she look, way men think she look. She's thoroughbred, same's you, lady-hawss, but they's all kin's ladies as well's all kin's hawsses, an' thoroughbred ain't always *well* bred.

"Finish yo' mess, Belle Rose, 'cause we's goin' fah, fah away, mighty soon, where oats is goin' to be sca'ce to you as cornpone is to me. But you heah me say one thing, lady-hawss; if they's trubble staht's fo' Misteh Clayborne this night, I'm goin' to help finish it an' they's goin' to be blood on this blade of mine befo' it's ended."

NATCHEZ-under-the-Hill swarmed over the flats beneath the bluff and straddled out into the river itself, on stilts that were none too stout nor upright, rotting or sinking into the unstable ooze. The wharves and plank sidewalks teetered and tilted crazily and treacherously, and the floors of the buildings either canted or, except in the best and newest erections or those on firm land, were braced and jacked up fairly level for dancing. The turbid river sloshed about between the piling, rising to within a foot or so of the planking at high tide, leaving a malodorous, fever-breeding mass at low.

When Clayborne and Lajeunesse reached the place, Scipio following them closely, lights shone out from hundreds of grimy, red-curtained windows, reflected in the flowing water where hundreds of small boats were moored with long painters to allow for the expected fall of the tide. Cargo-steamers, *bateaux*, mackinaws, pirogues, dugouts and keel-boats were anchored in the stream, a few lanterns twinkling on them in accordance with regulations.

Dingy lanterns swung from rusty cranes or perched drunkenly on standards, rather revealing the darkness than dissipating it. Some windows were open and through them floated a medley of crude music, shrill-scraping violins, melodeons and flutes, the high laughter of women, the deep rough voices of men, clink of glass and bottle, oaths, a pounded fist on a table, the noise of an upset bench and, at last, a shot.

This was followed by a splash of light that smeared the planks ahead of them with orange and silhouetted a crouching figure that leaped across the path, caught at a rope and shinned down to a boat. As they halted involuntarily, they heard the frantic paddle of his oars as he scuttled away beneath the boarding, dodging between the piles. No one followed him but some one shut the door.

"Missed him the first time," said Lajeunesse, "and didn't think him worth the second shot. My faith, but he ran like a scared rabbit! We'll go in here; it is the place of 'Pierre le Bossu.' Here everything goes on. Your man can come inside. There is a railed-off place for blacks."

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They entered. Whatever the cause of the disturbance, it had passed over. Clayborne saw a wide room, roughly boarded, with a peaked roof that, even this early, was cloudy with tobacco smoke. The floor was covered with sawdust for half its surface; the other half was used intermittently as a dancing floor, though the space for the dancers was limited by the closely set tables on three sides of it.

At the back, on a raised platform, the musicians played their jigging tunes, to which the rivermen and their bold partners capered as the fancy seized them. A long bar was served by half a dozen dispensers of straight "licker" and fancy "slings," "flips," "swizzles," "juleps" and "toddies."

The rivermen, including those who catered to the commerce of the water highway as well as those who conveyed it, included traders and trappers from the interior, lumbermen, dealers in horses, cotton and produce for the city markets, milling together, rounded up by the hawk-eyed gamblers, the bartenders and waiters, the women and the satellites of the little world of "Peter the Hunchback;" eager to spend and eager to collect; a medley of hot blood and appetites long held in leash and of those who catered to them.

The hunchback himself, unusually tall for one so deformed, a long black beard sweeping down in front, his hump high between lean shoulders, stood leaning on the rough balustrade of a mid-floor, reached by two wide ladders and forming ceiling for a third of the lower room. Here were the gaming tables, a separate bar and comparative quiet. On the floor, every one seemed moving, talking, laughing, gesticulating under the lamps that swung from rafters and ceiling or were sconced about the walls. Quick quarrels and disputes broke out constantly and died down. A rude good humor prevailed, not to be broken until pockets became empty and heads befuddled.

It was a kaleidoscope of color, gaudy, shifting. The women's dresses were both scant and gay; the men rivaled them in picturesqueness. Boots, polished shoes and moccasins stood side by side; fur caps, red shirts, tartaned blanket-coats, sashes, splashes of gay hues from flowing ties, earrings gleaming from under the long locks of the Creoles and French-Canadians, buckskin clothes and homespun, the black broadcloth of the professional gamesters, white coats, none too clean, on the mixers of drinks, weapons on hips or suggested in the concealments of pockets, long rifles leaning against the bar by their trapper owners, a few dogs, mostly hounds, and Pierre le Bossu like a spider, gloating over the shaking of his web.

Lajeunesse ordered a julep and the barman deftly mixed it, flirting with whisky and sprigs of mint, icing it and setting down in front of them the long glasses with straws stuck into the amber fluid.

A huge man standing next to Clayborne turned at the ring of the coin on the counter. His face, weathered almost to leather, was bushed in a curling mass of whiskers and his hair, reaching from under his broad-rimmed felt hat to his shoulders, fell in ringlets glossy with bear's-grease. A great beak of a nose, inflamed with liquor, veined at the tip and scarred across the bridge with a cut that also crossed his cheek, thrust out between gray eyes that were bloodshot with steady drinking. He wore a blue shirt with buttons of horn, and a scarlet tie, spotted with the liquor that had escaped his beard. His pantaloons were of leather, neither buck nor doe skin, tucked into high boots and belted with a wide strip of hide, tanned with the hair on. From the belt swung a knife in a sheath and a pistol in a holster.

"Pardner," he said, addressing Clayborne, "pardon me, but yon's hawss-mint, rank as the licker he's stuck it into. Sarve the gents some of the genuine stuff, Dave, an' take out thet pizen-weed thet ain't no better'n catnip! Give 'em some of the sprigs you got tucked away for the gamboliers on the upper deck. I'm privileged to admonish this yere Dave," he went on, "seein' as I've sloughed six hundred dollars in this yere place in the past forty-eight hours an' am still on my feet an' able to tell good licker from bad. Yes sirree! Serve thet slush to the gents' niggers, if they brought any with 'em!"

The bartender, imperturbable, glanced up toward Pierre le Bossu and received a nod that made him humor the giant. The man was full of liquor, likely at any moment to become truculent or overfriendly. Now he was amiable and he nodded and winked at Clayborne as he stretched out a mighty paw.

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"I'm Bowers," he said. "'B'arcat' Bowers, pardner, and proud to meet ye. My pants is made of b'arhide and my belt comes off the backbone of a catamount. I'm furred like a b'ar and my manners is apt to be rough but I know a gent when I see one. Let yore friend put up his money. This treat is on me, from my own jug of corn licker made of grain I growed myself 'way up the Arkansaw. When I goes on a spree I don't aim to have it cut short by none of 'Bossy's' pizen, so I brings my own licker and pays him for servin' it."

He ended in a roar of laughter, disclosing a cavernous mouth stubbed with strong teeth, stained by tobacco.

Lajeunesse nudged Clayborne, who had hard work to conceal a wince at the bone-crushing grip of the Bearcat. Clayborne had caught the inference of "'way up the Arkansaw" and was disposed to humor Bowers to aid his own interest. The fresh drinks were served and they sampled them, though Bowers threw away the straws, buried his beak in the mint sprigs and sucked noisily at the concoction.

"You're a riverman?" asked Clayborne.

"Thet's me! Owner of two keel-boats. Jest come down from Fort Smith on the western border of old Arkansaw State with a mixed cargo. Goin' back day after tomorrer with grub an' trade goods. Usual I goes up river to Memphis. This trip I made Natchez. Goin' way back inter Indian territory this time.

"I'd admire to have ye make the trip with me, pardner. Keel-boat an' *cordelle*-haul fur's the Fort, mebbe on'y to Pine Bluff, then we switch to mackinaw. Fish an' game all the way. Make the trip with me, stranger, though I reckon you may have yore time took up nigher Noo Orleans. But I'd admire to have you."

"We're going up to watch the play," said Lajeunesse. "See you later, friend."

But the giant was not to be shaken off so easily. By some drunken whim he had taken a fancy to them.

"It's one for you and two for Bossy up there," he muttered. "I like my kyards to lie between friends, but I'll go up with ye."

THEY mounted a ladder, Bowers in full control of his massive legs, and Pierre le Bossu greeted them at the top with a shrewd appraisal of their possibilities.

"Dice, pokaire or roulette, *messieurs?*" he asked.

"I'll roll the bones," said Bowers. "But, mark ye, Bossy, I use my own dice."

The hunchback shrugged his misshapen shoulders, a gleam of malevolence in his black eyes as Bowers brushed by him. Lajeunesse stopped at a table where poker was being played for high stakes and Clayborne, seeing the big riverman find a place for himself at a green-topped table, partitioned off into squares whereon numbers were stamped in large white figures, remained with the Frenchman, waiting a better opportunity to talk with Bowers. The Bearcat's offer was opportune but it was based upon nothing substantial and might evaporate with sober reflection.

Lajeunesse found a seat and bought his chips. Clayborne watched the play with a mounting pulse. He was a natural gambler. The tempting of fate and fortune by cards and dice, was in him a habit, almost intuition, perhaps the result of inherited latent tendencies toward the testing of hazards.

Of the two, dice or cards, he preferred the latter as giving opportunity for human wit and skill to supplement the turn of the pasteboards. The sight of the pips, the rapidly shuffled and cleverly dealt oblongs, the rise and fall of luck, the imperturbable or revealing faces of the players, the chances lost by timidity or recklessness, the coins and notes on the table, stirred a fever within his veins that made his fingers twitch to join the game.

After his visit to the lawyer that afternoon in behalf of Scipio, he had converted the jewelry into good cash at an accommodating banker's. Now his fingers strayed above the pocket where his wallet held the crisp bills, and his brain formed the suggestion to play and win, and then to win again.

His luck at cards had been phenomenal of late, and he felt that he was a fool not to press it—that he was easily the master of any of the men at the table in knowledge of the percentages, the reading of human emotions and concealing his own, save perhaps the one professional who proxied Pierre le Bossu and who would inevitably rise the winner.

He saw Lajeunesse split good pairs to draw vainly to straights and flushes, determined to fill one at any cost, playing a

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wide-open, daring game that slowly but surely drained his resources, recouped occasionally by a stroke of dazzling luck. Clayborne's fingers itched for the feel of the cards until he drove his nails into his palms.

The feel of an intent gaze upon him made him look up and with a frown he beheld the slightly mocking eyes of a planter from down the river, a man whom he knew to have been there when the *Louisville* left Belle Rose.

The *Baton Rouge* was in. Some of her passengers had wandered down to Natchez-under-the-Hill to pass the time before the boat left. Clayborne, looking to the floor below, readily picked out other sight-seers from the steamer. He touched Lajeunesse on the arm between plays.

"The *Baton Rouge* is in, ahead of schedule," he said. "How about your baggage?"

"She lies over tonight," replied the Frenchman. "Special shipment of valuable horses and mules to St. Louis. The shippers won't risk loading them after dark. She will not sail until eight o'clock. Sit down and take a hand, why don't you? It's a liberal game."

There was something in the composition of Lajeunesse akin to his own, thought Clayborne—the desire to challenge, whether by the roll of a die, the fall of a card or the hazard of an unknown trail in savage regions. For a moment he had forgotten the man who looked at him and he made a half motion to take seat beside Lajeunesse, for there were only five in the game and a sixth would not be unwelcome.

But, as he glanced around for an unoccupied chair, he again caught that half curious, half contemptuous glance that told him that scandal was spreading, that, if he played, he might be whispered of, even in that riverside den, as a man to watch, a man who cheated. His face grew a dull red and he fought hard to resist the impulse to cross to the man and demand an explanation, though he knew that a short laugh and a tacit refusal might leave him both ridiculous and powerless.

His pride was seared, deep-branded, even as his eyes met those of the planter from down-river. He was set between the horns of a dilemma—whether to maintain the challenge and accept the inevitable insult, or drop his own gaze and so acknowledge humiliation. To a man of Clayborne's high-strung breeding the situation was intolerable.

A bellowing roar dissolved the crisis. Bearcat Bowers had suddenly gripped the wrist of the dice thrower standing next to him, while his other great paw covered the cubes on the green cloth. Bossu was hurrying to the table as Clayborne pressed in.

"You keep out o' this, Bossy," shouted Bowers, "till I show up this capper of your'n. He's switched my dice, —— him, and I'm goin' to show him up! The bones under my hand are the ones he horn-swoggled in, and I'll wager both my keelboats against a chaw of terbacker thet they're quicksilvered. They're supposed to be my dice an' they've both fallen sixes. But my dice is inside his dirty, cheatin' fist, ready to switch back after he makes his passes and wins my money! Watch!"

The thick fingers of the riverman began to sink into the wrist of the squirming gambler, grinding the bones together in a torment that brought sweat to the victim's forehead. His fingers outspread inevitably, and two dice fell out upon the table. Bowers roared again.

"What'd I allus say? One for you and two for Bossy. His hump is lucky only for himself. Now I got my own bones back we'll throw these under my hand. Look at 'em! Sixes—double sixes! And sixes again! Easy money! Now you give me my coin back, an' you, Bossy, keep out of it like I told you, or I'll squeeze this gambolier of yours into squash!"

Pierre le Bossu did not move but his eyes roved as if seeking some one, commanding some action. Clayborne noticed it and watched for the result. The gaming platform was in an uproar. From below a hundred heads of men and women stared upward. The action had been swift; now it culminated.

It was the left wrist of the swindler that Bowers had practically broken. The fingers of his right hand dived into the pocket of a flowered vest and produced a small derringer pistol lying snugly along the palm of the hand that was so apt at juggling dice.

Quick as he was, the giant Bearcat, like his namesake far from clumsy in action, was quicker and with a bellow of rage he struck at hand and weapon with his sledge-like fist and sent the pistol to the floor, skidding along the planks. Then he closed in, caught the gambler by crotch and throat

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and hurled him, as a woodchopper might toss aside a severed bough, crashing through the balustrade and down into the gaping crowd that parted suddenly as the helpless body plunged to lie writhing on the sawdust, shoulder-blade and the big bone of one arm broken.

THE crowd was thick about the dicing table. Through it came gliding, lithe and cat-footed, the man dressed in the black broadcloth of a professional player, his frock-coat unbuttoned, who had caught Le Bossu's eye. As the spectators stood frozen for the moment by Bower's disposal of the man with the derringer, the newcomer came out of their circle and his white, supple hands vanished beneath the skirts of his coat with a swift and practised deftness that meant but one thing. Here were no derringers tucked in vest pockets, but weapons of heavier, deadlier caliber, lying on the flanks, well-concealed, yet easy of removal from their polished holsters.

Clayborne jumped and pinioned the man's hands behind his back. From out of the ruck Lajeunesse suddenly appeared at his side, debonair and smiling, balancing his guns. Bowers stood at bay, upreared like a grizzly with armed claws, his big gun in his right, his bowie-knife in his left. From right and left men paid by Le Bossu were shouldering forward. Others were mounting the ladders. Already pistol barrels were lifting against the trio, Clayborne, Lajeunesse and Bowers.

Through the packed mass on the lower floor, like a swimmer cleaving through a heavy sea, came the figure of a black man. Scipio had leaped the little barrier where he waited with the other negroes and, head and shoulders down, came charging through the mob. Le Bossu's gunmen, on the lower treads of the ladders, turned, guessing the cause of the new disturbance, prepared to shoot the man if he attempted to mount. As long as he was in the crowd they dared not try to pick him off. The ladders commenced well under the floor of the gaming platform.

The man with the broken arm and shoulder was being carried off by two bartenders and into the space given them Scipio bounded. He raised his head and saw the men waiting for him on the ladders. Sinking to his haunches, he launched himself upward as a lion springs, catching the edge of the floor above him and swinging himself up and over in one perfect coordination of strength and grace, to rise upright by the side of Clayborne, his great chest heaving, his eyes flashing.

In an instant his knife was out from between his shoulder-blades and flashing in his hand.

"You get a gun, suh," he said. "I'll hold this gen'l'man with one han' an', if he even snooks his ear, I'll jes' natcherally kyarve the heart out of him through his back ribs."

He forced the gambler's two wrists together, transferred both of them to his right hand, shoving them well up between the man's shoulders. With his left he handled his long knife, sticking the point into the flesh that quivered and goosed but dared not wince.

"I hain't got my money back yit, Bossy," said Bowers. "I'm waitin' for it. Sixty dollars! If you tip the word to start trouble, I'm goin' to bore you right straight through your wish-bone an' out through the middle of your lucky hump, to begin with. If me an' my friends hain't let to go clear out of here—with my sixty dollars—I'm warnin' ye thet thar's a hundred rivermen of the Arkansaw thet'll make Pierre le Bossu's joint look like a beech-tree double-struck and splintered by lightnin'!"

Le Bossu sneered.

Lajeunesse, slipping a pistol into Clayborne's hand, broke into a torrent of French. Most of those present were able to get the gist of, it, for French was more spoken than English on the three rivers at that time.

"I'll add to that warning, Pierre le Bossu!" he said. "I am Basil Lajeunesse, known to be here tonight by Captain Hall of Natchez. I am on my way for the third time to join Fremont in St. Louis for his third expedition. If anything happens to me and my friends it will be a joke to what will happen to you when Fremont, Carson and Godey hear of it, as they will!"

Carson was far away in Taos, New Mexico, but Le Bossu did not know that. He did know Carson by sight and repute, for Carson, met on a Mississippi steamboat by Fremont three years before, was well known as a fearless fighter and matchless shot, as his father had been before him. Godey, too, had his reputation and it was not well to meddle with any one of Fremont's picked men.

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Le Bossu weighed the chances, figured on the relative amount of truth and bluff in the Frenchman's assurance that Captain Hall knew him to be in that particular place, noted the strangers who had wandered in from the *Baton Rouge*, sized up Clayborne's dress and demeanor and wound up his swift calculations at the muzzle-end of Bowers' unwavering gun.

Finally he motioned to the banker of the dice game, who slid out sixty dollars in bills, licked his lips with a furtive tongue-tip and raised his head. The upraised pistols of Bossu's men promptly disappeared and their bearers arrested all movement toward the scene.

Le Bossu stepped forward and picked up the dice the gambler had used.

"If these are loaded," he said in English, "that man shall nevaire show his face in my place again."

He threw the cubes and, as they fell again to sixes, snatched them angrily up and tossed them to the lower floor.

"It ees so!" he exclaimed. "Nevaire shall he show face again in Pierre le Bossu's place, vere the game is always fair."

Some of the sophisticated grinned; others hid their smiles. It might well be that the man's face, being spotted as one whose crookedness was exposed, would not be seen for a while at Pierre le Bossu's, but not from any excess of fair play on the hunchback's part. Pierre had saved his face; he had handed back money; he had found another excuse than fear of reprisal.

Clayborne ordered Scipio to release the wrists of the gunman. The latter, chafing his strained sinews, turned upon Clayborne with the eyes of a snake.

"I shall even the score with you," he said.

Clayborne looked at him evenly and the man's venomous gaze faltered and fell.

"By ——!" he said to a fellow as he mingled with the crowd. "There is a man who is not afraid of death. His eyes have no more soul in them than water agate."

CLAYBORNE was undergoing the paradox of friendly torture in the grip of Bowers.

"Pardner, you saved my life," said the latter. "Quick an' cute, you acted when thet chap was on the draw. I'm not forgettin' it. I hain't no hankering for lead in my gizzard, yet a while. Let's get out of this rattler's hole. Whar are you stayin'?"

Clayborne told him the name of his tavern.

"Then let's go there," suggested Bowers. "I've got a room thar, though I hain't used it. I'll tote along my jug of corn licker an' we'll make a night of it. Cute an' quick you acted, pardner. Name how I can even up the score an' I'm yore man."

Lajeunesse squared his account at the poker table and the strangely assorted trio went out, followed by Scipio bearing the jug of corn whisky without which the Bearcat refused to leave. At the door the down-river planter appeared at Clayborne's elbow.

"It appears you do not approve of cheating, Mr. Clayborne," he said with a rising inflection that made of the words a virulent insult.

The man had evidently been drinking heavily before he arrived at Pierre le Bossu's, but Clayborne's hand went swiftly to the butt of the pistol he had thrust into the bosom of his vest. Discretion prompted him and, instead of shooting, he floored the planter with a blow between the eyes and strode out into the night after his companions.

Behind him Scipio stepped across the fallen man as he would have stepped over a log of wood. The incident passed unnoticed by Bowers and Lajeunesse, who had gone on ahead. No one followed from the door. The planter had deliberately separated himself from the crowd, which was already turning back to the bar after the excitement, to fling his gratuitous insult at Clayborne.

The cool night air swiftly tempered Clayborne's hot blood and he realized that in this act he had burned the last vestige of his bridges that might link him to his caste. He recollected the planter's name, remembering him as Manville, a disappointed aspirant for the hand of Lucille Brandon. Now Manville would waste neither trouble nor time to offset the humiliating memory of the blow by spreading the most vicious account of that affair at Belle Rose.

It was possible that he would concentrate on Natchez, where he must believe Clayborne to be staying, but his business might carry him on up the river on the *Baton Rouge*, where he would infallibly seek out Lajeunesse. There might be other passengers aboard who knew of Clayborne's

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story. If the Frenchman heard it, he would not be keen to have a discredited man in Fremont's picked party.

And ever since his talk with Lajeunesse, Fremont's expedition and its ultimate bourne appealed more strongly every hour to Clayborne. In the public prints he had read with interest of Fremont's previous expeditions. The conquest of California had quickened within him the spirit of adventure. Now, outcast if not outlawed, burning with resentment, impoverished, the dream of a new empire that he might help to win became a brilliant vision of hope.

He had taken part in the current debates at the clubs of the glories of the long strip of land that lay between the mighty mountains and the sea, geographically shut off from the rest of the continent—a vague, vast region of towering cliffs and deep ravines, of wide, swift rivers and bottomless lakes, of fertile valleys swarming with game, of magnificent forests, of even climate, of great harbors where the navies of the world could swim like chips in a mill pond.

Spain, in the days of Cabrillo, had claimed its southern half. England, in the person of doughty Drake, had landed to the north and named it New Albion. It might be another Eldorado of pearls and gems with golden sands to its beaches and river bars. Russia, it was said, had established trading camps and forts there and now Mexico, Spain's western representative, was plotting, rumor declared, to deliver this land to England.

But it belonged by nature to the United States. The district of Oregon bounded it on the north, shutting it off from the British possessions of Canada. There were two British squadrons in the Pacific, sent there immediately after the incorporation of Texas with the States and the imminence of war with Mexico that followed that event. One lay in the mouth of the Columbia River, a larger one off Mazatlan on the Mexican coast under Admiral Seymour. And at Mazatlan lay the United States squadron under Commodore Sloat, each commander zealously watching the other.

It was hinted that Fremont set out as a military pioneer as much as an explorer; that he carried sealed orders; that swift couriers would relay along his trail once the break with Mexico was certain; that his hand would be the one to pull the trigger of conquest, allying with Commodore Sloat to outwit and hold off the British.

It was a race for the possession of a new dominion, of the frontier line that would hold the keys to the Pacific. Union Jack or Stars and Stripes, the first flag to displace the Mexican standard would represent the unwritten rule, national as well as civil, that possession is nine points of the law. Neither empire, once established, would give up the acquisition.

Honor, riches, lands, a name new-blazoned by personal deeds, might easily be his, Clayborne thought, as they left the flats and started to climb the bluff to the town. And Fremont was the vehicle by which he must travel. Doubtless random emigrant parties were on the way but with such lay no glory, no chance of actual fighting even if he were able to join one of the wagon trains.

It was doubtful if his means would stretch sufficiently for him to pay for a share of the necessary provisions and outfit for the long trip after he had equipped Scipio and himself. To attempt to cross the plains, the deserts and the mountains alone was, he acknowledged, sheer folly. To serve under Fremont as a volunteer appeared his only chance. He came to a conclusion to tell Lajeunesse everything, frankly and trust to the Frenchman's innate sense of discrimination and judgment of humanity. At least it would bring matters to a crisis.

ONCE or twice Lajeunesse and Bowers looked back but, clear of the maze of buildings and wooden walks, they kept steadily ahead, seeming to have found some common field of entertainment. The Bearcat had visibly sobered since the fracas. Clayborne walked alone, building his air-castles and planning to strengthen their foundations; Scipio strode springily in the rear, bearing the jug.

The road twisted up the hill. A moon had risen, sending deep shadows across the way that was deep-trodden in the soft alluvial soil. Lajeunesse and Bowers disappeared around a bend, just beyond where a gravel quarry had been opened for road building, forming a pit of blackness to the right. The crest of the bluff was not far ahead and Clayborne hurried his steps to

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catch up with his friends, for his tavern was on the summit and he wanted to clear up matters with Lajeunesse and feared the Frenchman might elude him.

Scipio's senses, acute as a cat's, sought out the thick shadows with sight and smell and hearing. The subtle "something" handed down to him from his Masai forebears, the sixth-sense, born of the jungle trail and long generations of perpetual watchfulness against surprize from prowling beast and warring tribesmen, warned him of danger. His knowledge of the ways of Natchez-under-the-Hill had something to do with this. He had seen the look in the eyes of the discomfited gunman. He did not believe in Le Bossu's easy dismissal of the affair.

Whether he saw the shifting of an opaque body in the transparent shadow, whether he caught the faint sound of shifting gravel or snuffed at a tinge of human scent, he could not have determined. Something told him that something lurked in the pit, as a lioness lurks beside the waterhole. He set down the jug and squatted with tense sinews. He did not think that he had been seen and he was sure that the object of the ambush was Clayborne. Then he found his target as a small stone tinkled.

Three things were simultaneous: Scipio's Masai war-cry, a spurt of fire that blossomed in the dark and the swift flinging of Scipio's knife, jerked unerringly from between his shoulders, and overhead a streak of silver where its flight crossed a moonbeam.

Then the black man launched himself forward into the gap, hard after some one who had cried out and then started to scramble up the sides of the gap. Clayborne had already wheeled and fired back to where the bullet had come humming out of the dark toward him. Shouts and hurrying footsteps proclaimed Lajeunesse and Bowers coming to the rescue. Clayborne turned to meet them.

"Hold your fire!" he called. "Scipio is after him." The next instant they saw a figure drag itself out of the blot of shadow to the rim of the pit, clearly silhouetted against the moon, followed by another that seemed to leap up as if impelled by wings. The first man lunged off, running toward the river, and after him went the springing figure of Scipio. Both disappeared and there was the dull sound of a second shot.

The three left the road and climbed fast separating a little as they hastily scouted riverward. The moon soared out of a cloud and they saw one man returning. It was Scipio. As they joined him he stooped and wiped his blade upon the short turf.

"Foun' my knife afteh it hit that gambleh man in the ahm," he said. "I caught him befo' he got to the aidge of the bluff. He fiahed at me but he took too long to move his secon' pistol an' he missed me. He ain' goin' trouble you no mo', Misteh Clayborne. That man jest natcherly fell off'n the bluff. I tol' that lady-hawss there might be blood on my blade tonight, an' they suah was. It was the man you stopped from shootin' this gen'l'man." He indicated Bearcat Bowers.

"Did you kill him?" asked the riverman.

"I guess he's either lost too much blood or gained too much wateh to live," said Scipio simply. "He jest natcherly fell plumb into the riveh an' it's kind of deep down there where the big riveh-cats are swimmin'. I reckon they're goin' to feed well tonight. The gahd of my knife suah rattled on his ribs."

"A good riddance and a clean quittance," said Lajeunesse.

Clayborne gripped Scipio's hand. Bowers cleared his throat.

"Wal," he said, "I reckon you left that jug of licker in the road, didn't you? We'd better go down and get it."

CHAPTER VI

BOWERS MAKES A NIGHT OF IT

THE Bearcat could not be dissuaded from his intention of making a night of it. That the incidents at Le Bossu's had partially sobered him he seemed to resent. He insisted that he was on a holiday and intended to make the most of it.

"Termorrer, or the day after," he said, "I go back to work gatherin' up peltries, doin' some trapping an' more trading, gen'lly 'arnin' my living by the sweat of my brow. This is my time to howl an' I aim to howl loud an' long. If you agrees to make it a concert, I'll admire to have ye help with the harmony, otherwise I plays it solo, an' no harm done."

They humored him for a while and then Clayborne pleaded the necessity of a business talk with Lajeunesse, who was to be

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given the chance of a few hours' sleep before the *Baton Rouge* started in the morning. Bowers admitted the logic of the business talk but not the need of sleep.

"A man can sleep when he's alone," he said. "When they's good comp'ny, why break it up? But bizness is another thing. If I didn' attend to bizness myself the American Fur Comp'ny 'd have me chivvied off the Arkansaw long ago, like they've chased the independent traders off'n the Missouri. Hop to your war-talk."

Clayborne told his story very simply to Lajeunesse and without comment from the Frenchman, who listened gravely.

"You honor me with your confidence," said Lajeunesse when Clayborne stopped. "As for the telling of it to me, to mold my own opinion, there was no need. I know a man when I see one. We of the frontier judge a man, not by what is said of him but by his deeds. I shall be proud, my friend, to set what I think of you beside what tattlers may say and back my own judgment. You are an aristocrat, I a rover, yet we are men of the same kidney and it is my regret that we part in the morning and my hope that we may meet again."

"No more your hope than mine," replied Clayborne.

If Lajeunesse suspected some special meaning in the words, he said nothing. The voyager's courtesy was exquisite. Since Clayborne no longer alluded to Fremont Lajeunesse had set himself to dismiss the matter as one held private by his friend. Clayborne hinted at nothing of his project with Bowers but, after he had bade Lajeunesse farewell—for he deemed it wiser not to run the risk of embarrassing the Halls, who might see Lajeunesse aboard in the morning—he went back to the Bearcat and helped him empty the contents of the "licker-jug." They got to talking of Fremont and his men, and Clayborne found that the Bearcat knew some of them by reputation, others by actual contact. The Mississippi was the Great Highway and to Memphis, St. Louis, Natchez, New Orleans and the principal river-ports came, sooner or later, every one who amounted to anything and, as Bowers put it, "had gumption enough to git up an' come out of the backwoods."

"I never met your friend Lajeunesse before," said Bowers, "though I've heard of him. He's Fremont's favorite man. Climbed with Fremont to the top of the Rockies; swam half-way down Grand Cañon to lighten the canoe. I know Alec Godey, a bit of a dandy with his black curly hair, but a good man. Tessier, Cadotte, Gouin, Menard, Clement and Maxwell. But the king-pin of 'em all is Kit Carson. Yes sirree, Bob. I've seen him in action. My father knowed his father.

"Kit's about my age—thirty-five. He's Kaintuck born same 's I am an' Missouri bred. Kit went to New Mexico when he was fifteen; went to Santa Fé, teamed it at the Copper Mines down to Chihuahua and then went plumb out to the Rio Colorado in Californy w'en he was on'y seventeen. Yes sirree. Say, w'en Kit was twelve years old, he tracks a band of sixty Crows who had swiped a bunch of hawsess, snakes up to within ten foot of where the bucks was in a log-house fort, cuts loose the cayuses an' shoots for luck at the Injuns. Never told a lie, never went back on a friend, never was afraid of a derned thing, man, beast or devil; thet's Kit Carson! Reg'lar dare-devil himself, an' never been teched but once; that was by a Blackfoot bullet thet broke his left shoulder. His first wife was a Sioux squaw an' he was good to her. Daughter's at school in St. Louis. Now he's married the daughter of Beaubien, a New Mexico merchant.

"Farmin' it down nigh Taos on Cimarron Crick, they tell me. But if he said he'd jine Fremont, he'll jine him if he has to swim through —— an' bilin' water. Fremont wouldn't have got nowhere 'thout Kit Carson. They're frien's.

"Lemme tell you one thing about Kit Carson an' you'll see the kind of two-handed, quick-footed fightin' American he is. Yes sirree! One time they's a French bully in camp on Green River by the South Pass, who's a bull-bustin' hell-driver, a big man, an' handy with fists. Name's Sherman an' they called him the 'Big Bully of the Mountains.' Licked the stuffin' out of a bunch of Canadians an' goes around sayin' Americans was only fit to be taken over the knees an' switched. Kit's a quiet sort till he gets goin', but this riles him.

"'I'm the triflingest of all the Americans in camp,' he says. 'Suppose you cut

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yore little switch an' start in with me.' And pulls the Frenchy's long nose for him."

"Both mounts; Frenchy has a rifle an' Kit a pistol. They rides off, wheels an' comes a-rarin' and a-tearin' down on each other, both holding fire till the cayuses' heads is touchin'. Then both fires, a'most to once, but Kit's the quickest an' sends his ball through the Frenchy's hand, out through his wrist and through the elbow, while Frenchy's bullet grazes Kit's left eye and trims his ha'r, the fire singein' it. Thet's the only time Kit ever gits into a personal rumpus. Sherman begged for his life. A parson told me thet yarn.

"Boonslick County in Missouri claims him but he was born in Kaintuck right nex' to my father's own holding, an' they moves to Missouri w'en Kit is one year old, same's we did. Lemme tell you a thing Carson an' Godey did one time on Fremont's second expedition. Thet'll show you the kind of men Fremont totes along with him.

"It's on the Mohave River where they come across two greasers, man and boy. Man's name Fuentes, kid's name Hernandez. They was in camp at Archilette Spring, Fuentes an' his woman, the father an' mother of the kid and another greaser. They're all ahead of a big caravan with thirty cayuses. One hundred Injuns surrounds Fuentes an' the kid, who's on hawss guard, an' charges inter camp shootin' arrers like rain. Fuentes an' the boy drives off most of the cayuses plumb through the Injuns an' rides —— bent for help. Meantime they leaves the twenty-five cayuses they saved at a waterin' place so they could travel faster. They find Fremont's outfit after sixty miles. Next day Fremont's outfit finds the cayuses driven off. An' they finds the two men dead, stuck full of arrers, one with his arms an' legs cut off. The wimmin is gone.

"Carson up an' sez thet natcherly he hain't much use for Mexicans but he's got a whole lot of respect for a woman, black, yeller or white, an' he aims to teach those Injuns a lesson. Godey, who's French, born in St. Louis, sez he admires Carson's talk an' subscribes to his sentiments. The two of 'em volunteers to pursue. An' they pursues considerable.

"Follers the trail inter a ravine at night, waits in the grass till sunrise an' locates four lodges. They rides a-whoopin' right among 'em. An arrer streaks through Godey's collar but they shoots two Injuns an' captures a lad. Godey's scalpin' his man when the buck, with two balls in him, jumps up howlin' an' spoutin' blood, an' Godey has to kill him all over ag'in. They was sixty pair of moccasins in a baskets an' pots on the fire stewin' hawss meat. Thet meant more Injuns comin', an' a whole lot in camp thet they had stampeded.

"I reckon thet takes nerve, in a desert country to foller Injun trail day an' night an' attack the bunch on sight 'thout stoppin' to count odds. A hundred miles they rides in thirty hours, driving fifteen of Fuentes' cayuses before 'em on the way home, two scalps flyin' on the end of Godey's gun. They lets the Injun boy go. 'Course them two wimmin was dead, an' worse, but they sure teaches Injuns round thet locality to respect wimmin a heap more than they did afore. Yes sirree!"

CLAYBORNE encouraged the riverman, and the talk inevitably led to California. Bowers had known men who had been there and declaimed upon the value of the territory.

"Texas come in because she wanted to," he said. "Mexico don't like it an' she's got a chip on her shoulder. Trouble's brewin'. One thing's sartain as death an' taxes; England ain't goin' to stand by an' see Mexico cede over Californy to us. If we want Californy we've got to go git it. If Mexico plucks up narve enough to fight over Texas, thar's our excuse, as the b'ar said about the honey w'en a bee stung him. If Fremont's thar w'en the break comes, he'll be the Johnny on the spot to haul up the Stars and Stripes. I'd like powerful well to jine in with the trip, but they's two strong reasons ag'in' it. Leastwise they's one reason now an' another one thet's likely to come erlong.

"If you'll come up-river with me, dern me if I don't go plumb to Bent's Fort with ye, anyway! I'll tote in trade stuff, terbacker, macaroni, rice, vermilion, powder, lead an' cotton goods. They's settlements all erlong the Arkansaw fur as Bent's an' a good wagon road above Muskogee."

So they talked and cemented the friendship that had really started with the fight at Le Bossu's. Clayborne's concern lest

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the death of the gambler be laid to them, Bowers laughed at.

"River's got him," he said. "We'll be aboard my keel-boat termorrer by the heft of this jug. And, aboard a keel-boat, it's river law as prevails. Bossy won't make no fuss. He'd have the place burned down and him in it. Natchez town hain't goin' ter make a fuss. They won't tech yore nigger. We'll stow him away on board first thing. I've got some water bullies aboard thet'll keep him safe. He's a fighter, thet nigger. No yeller streak in him. Worth a peck of good money, he is."

"He's free," said Clayborne, "or will be tomorrow as soon as the papers are registered."

"Wal," said Bowers, "thet's yore bizness. They's a heap of niggers best off as slaves, thet's sartain. I don't believe in givin' them equal rights like they're beginnin' to argy erbout, but I reckon a nigger's a man an' not a monkey, an' I hain't a believer in treatin' a man like a dawg. Yore nigger will make a good freedman.

"Don't you worry none about thet killin', but send him aboard soon's you kin with the lady-hawss he spoke of, an' foller soon's you've got a mind. I measures my sprees by the hour-glass of my licker-jugs. This is the last one an' she's low. I won't drink tavern-juice an' I'm ready to pull out. We'll meet t' other boat of mine comin' down at Pine Bluff or thereabout an' transfer some men for the Cornell Line. Now let's you an' me finish the jug. No sense in goin' ter bed. You kin sleep all the way up to Fort Smith, if you've a mind to."

WAITING until after the *Baton Rouge* had left the landing and the bustle of her departure had died, to avoid possible meeting with those who might have gone down to say farewell, Clayborne remained in the tavern after breakfast and then parted temporarily with Bowers, agreeing to report by mid-afternoon aboard the keel-boat that had been pointed out to him from the tavern window.

He took Scipio up-town and, after the formalities, presented him with the papers that made him free. Scipio received them with the gravity of a Masai chieftain, fire showing in his eyes as, outside the notary's office, he turned to Clayborne.

"A white man can't turn black, nor a black man white," he said simply. "But both ouah hearts are red, ouah blood is red. If it is spilled togetheh, no one can say this is the blood of a white man, that is the blood of a black. You have made me a free man in this country where I was a slave, but while mah blood runs in mah body it runs to serve you. You have made my soul free but my heart is eveh in youah debt. You could have sold me an' you did not. If you need the money I'll sell myse'f an' give it to you."

"I do not need it, Scipio," said Clayborne. "We are on even terms. I am going to try and join Fremont's expedition. I should like to have you come with me. We shall both be soldiers together. There will be dangers and, I think, rewards."

Scipio's eyes flashed.

"I am the first son of all mah fathehs who was a slave and not a fighteh," he said. "The trip sounds good to me."

Back at the tavern, after buying holsters, pistols and ammunition—leaving rifles and other equipment to be purchased later, at Bowers's suggestion, with a horse or mule for Scipio—the black man groomed the mare. Such services he was to do in recompense for Clayborne's furnishing his outfit. There was no question of equality between them. Scipio's position was self-secured by his own poise. The freedom had given him something that his demeanor had always suggested but hitherto lacked in servitude. He was preeminently a chief and the son of a chief, and his superiority was acknowledged without demur by the negroes with whom he came in contact.

Scipio, with their none too plentiful baggage, went down to the river in advance, leaving Clayborne to ride on La Belle Rose. Midway, Clayborne heard the sound of galloping hoofs gaining on his easy canter and, reining in to allow the hurried rider to pass and to avoid the cloud of red dust that enveloped him, drew to the side of the road.

To his surprize the man pulled up his lathered, snorting horse and he recognized once more Manville, the planter from down-river, the scowl on whose face was enhanced by the purple and yellow bruises that ringed both his eyes and testified to the strength of Clayborne's blow.

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"Look you, Clayborne," said the man, panting as if he had been the ridden instead of the rider. "I just traced you to the tavern and now I find you are sneaking out of town. It is just as well, for Natchez knows you for the card-cheat that you are. All the river will know it before I am through. But, before you leave, you will give me satisfaction for this blow."

"You brought it on yourself," said Clayborne coldly. "You are a gossip trader. I should have preferred to horsewhip you but I had no whip with me. I have now," he added ominously.

"There are some who still esteem you a gentleman," sneered Manville, "though they will change their minds shortly. I will give you the benefit of their doubt and meet you as a man of honor. I see you have pistols with you. So have I."

Clayborne saw that the man was almost beside himself with rage and humiliation. Whatever gossip he had spread must have been, for the time at least, offset by the fact that Clayborne had knocked him down and blackened both his eyes, making a mock of him. Yet there was method in his madness. Clayborne remembered that Manville was credited with having successfully fought more than one duel, being accounted an excellent shot.

Still he hesitated, though his own choler was beginning to mount, realizing the slander that Manville would spread through the State, were he permitted. He did not want to kill the man and he was not afraid of Manville's skill. He had tested his own newly bought pistols. He had had the springs filed until they were almost hair-triggered. He was far the cooler of the two, so far, and he was better mounted.

"Did the babbler, from whom you gleaned your tale concerning me, mention the fact that I notched my cousin Philip's ear? And that after Philip had the first shot? It would appear to me that I have decorated you sufficiently."

Manville swore at him and snatched a pistol from his holster. Instantly Clayborne whirled the mare about and fired. With a curse that ended in a cry of pain Manville dropped his pistol in the dust and, with difficulty restraining his startled horse, rearing at the shots, managed to turn its head toward town and rode furiously up the hill dripping blood from his arm. Clayborne watched him, soothed the fretful mare and smiled grimly. He had repeated Carson's feat at Green River with the "Big Bully of the Mountains."

CHAPTER VII

UP THE ARKANSAS RIVER

THE keel-boat, the *Susy J.*, procured a tow up-river for a few hours until the tide shifted. Together with some mackinaw barges she formed one of many strings of craft going up-river, with as many more coming down. There was constant hailing between these river caravans. Everybody seened to know everybody else. Messages were interchanged with rough jocularity and the news from up-river and down passed eagerly. Bear-cat Bowers, smoking a great pipe, was on his element and in it. Lack of sleep seemed nothing to him and, from the moment he stepped aboard, he eschewed liquor.

But Clayborne slept after he had seen the mare bedded and knew that she was comfortable and not too nervous at her new mode of travel. Oats and hay were aboard, but he was prepared gradually to break her in to grass on the trip. Bowers told him that the keel-boat would usually tie up to the bank every night, once they entered the Arkansas, and Clayborne figured on riding along the river bluffs whenever convenient.

The *corvelle* or *cordelle* mode of travel, with fifteen to twenty men hauling on a hawser a thousand feet long, attached to the mast of the keel-boat, would average from fifteen to twenty miles a day, which should not prove too much for La Belle Rose if she was to attempt to cross the remainder of the continent. Clayborne's personal attention to his mare rose from no idea that Scipio would slight her, but was combined of his love for the animal and hers for her master and the fact that he expected eventually to play groom to her on the trip.

The keel-boat was provided with a comfortable cabin aft and a forward house where the crew slept. The cabin was divided for a galley, where reigned a black cook, the property of Bowers. Bunks were built in and in one of these Clayborne slept and slept until he awoke to find it twilight and Bowers calling him to supper. The *Susy J.* had swapped some rice for

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a quarter of antelope and with steaks from this and fish from the river, together with strong coffee, of which Bowers must have swallowed a quart, with hot biscuits and preserves, they made a hearty meal. Bowers turned into his bunk and Clayborne, after a visit forward to Scipio and the mare, still drowsy, lay down again and, lulled by the motion, soothed by tobacco, ignored the Bearcat's snores and slept again.

A great moon shone in the cabin windows when next he awakened, illumining and softening the fiercely modeled face of Bowers, his great mouth open, his snoring ended, sleeping like a great child. The air was sweet and cool; the steamer had disappeared with the barges back of them. A square sail was set and with wind and tide they were swinging up the broad expanse of water flowing smoothly save where an eddy swirled about snag or sandbank. Some one in the knot of men forward picked at a banjo, and others were singing softly, their voices coming back to Clayborne with the fragrant whiffs from their pipes.

"I long to see its muddy waters,
Yo-ho, the roaring river!
To glide upon its yellow waters,
Yo-ho, the mad Missouri!"

Trees fringed the bluffs and lowlands on either side of them; the tide, speeding them, sucked along the side of the craft with gentle gurgling sounds and the balm of the mid-Summer night soothed Clayborne's spirit. He was committed to the great adventure; he had started on the long, long trail that ended he knew not where. Back of him lay extravagance, gaming, a romance that had been all one-sided, fruit that had turned to Dead Sea apples before it was plucked, feverish days and nights, entanglements slowly meshing him in ruin, the loss of his estate, the plots of his cousin, a nightmare of inutility from which he seemed to wake as one enters a convalescence—purged, eager for new life.

Along this water-road three hundred years before, Hernando de Soto had sailed. Its waters had closed over his dead body; he was buried in its ooze. Alonso de Pineda might have discovered its lower waters still earlier in the sixteenth century. In 1673 Père Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet voyaged down the river from the Wisconsin to the mouth of the Arkansas. Pierre Esprit Radisson and Menard des Groseilliers were said to have navigated its uncertain waters eight years earlier. In 1680 Père Louis Hennepin, sent by France under La Salle, explored from the mouth of the Illinois to the Falls of St. Anthony and two years later René Robert Cavalier, the Sieur de la Salle himself, reached the mouth of the river and claimed the country which it drained, naming it Louisiana in honor of his king, Louis XIV.

A century later Great Britain wrested all the basin lying east of the middle of the river, except the Isle of New Orleans in the delta. The War of Independence saw many a squabble over navigation rights, and Spain fought the Continental Congress long and hard, imposing heavy burdens on the commerce of the young nation of America until a treaty was made with the help of France and, finally, the Louisiana Purchase left its basin, an area of a million and a quarter square miles of rich country, practically within American boundaries.

Yet it was only nine years, as Clayborne knew, since Jean N. Nicollet traced the source of the great artery of commerce and fertility to the neighborhood of Lake Itasca, two and a half thousand miles above the Gulf of Mexico.

From the Gulf to the headwaters of the Missouri in the Rockies, eight thousand feet above sea level, there flowed a continuous stream over forty-two hundred miles long—the longest in the world. Fifteen thousand miles of waterways made up the total of the Mississippi and its tributaries, figures to overwhelm the brain with cosmic visions and dreams of empire. And he was to cross these same Rockies with their mighty watershed and travel on over the sierra to the borders of the great Pacific—to harbors coveted since first Magellan sailed from the Old World four hundred years ago.

How mightily, thought Clayborne, had the nation grown in three-quarters of a century, and yet its advancement at the beginning had been generally slow compared with the gains of later years—Louisiana, Oregon, Texas and now California, with ultimately all the intervening territory in a great belt across the continent. What was its ultimate destiny?

Thronged, as it must be, by peoples

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seeking liberty, equality and justice, forming a patriotism based upon conditions proven to be truly democratic and fraternal, backed by incalculable riches, what a mighty factor must it ultimately be, if only by sheer force of example, in the progress of the world toward democracy. Out of the growing population giants had invariably arisen whenever needed as leaders to shape policies, control laws and defend the right and peace of the great commonwealth.

His own troubles became very petty as his meditations lengthened, his own self insignificant while there dawned within him a desire to bear a part in the molding of America's history, however insignificant, to be able to feel, to say, "I was a patriot; I helped to acquire new lands for Freedom."

More and more his desire grew to ally himself with such a natural leader as Fremont. He was not overhumble as to his own capacities but he realized that, if his own star had not arisen, it might yet shine; that he had hitherto neglected his opportunities, his advantages. More, that it was but a little thing to own land; it was a far greater thing that the nation owned him, gave him a part in a glorious heritage, set him a duty to perform that called for his best powers—a duty that was a privilege.

So, as the voyage lengthened, John Clayborne, Aristocrat, ceased to exist and John Clayborne, Patriot, was born.

IT WAS humdrum enough—the slow creep of the keel-boat, tugging against the tide, around bends that formed U's and S's, deep and shallow. It was exasperating to cut across the curves and wait for the appearance of the *Susy J.*, but Clayborne made the best of it. He would ride ahead, put the mare to grazing and spend the hours fishing or, borrowing Bowers's fowling-piece, augment the larder with prairie chickens, quail and rabbits. Sometimes he got a shot at an antelope or deer. Once he saw buffaloes but a band of Cherokees was after them and he contented himself with watching the chase.

Often Scipio came with him, a transformed Scipio fast reverting back to a hunter-warrior, running sometimes with a hand on the pommel and with long strides that kept up with the mare's canter, a specimen of black but magnificent manhood. And Clayborne became tanned, learned some prairie craft, hardened his muscles and deepened his chest, passing by slow transition from his old life to the new that lay before him. The tedious trip was a fortunate circumstance in this. Life became simpler, with a broader vision born of the hours of self-thought and the traveling amid wide vistas.

Nights he foregathered with Bowers and gained respect for the sterling qualities of Bearcat's nature. Bowers was rough, as his frontier life demanded. He loved to spend a certain restless energy stored up during his river trips in spasms of roistering that were almost boyish; he was hard where a man should be hard; his fierce features were an index to part of his nature but in many ways he had the heart of a child. For all his experience, he struck Clayborne as undeveloped. And his love of fair play and honesty, his reverence for women, his weakness for children, as they met them on other boats or at river settlements, constituted a chivalry of character that commanded admiration.

It seemed to Clayborne that Bowers grew milder in some subtle way as they worked up the river. He had quit drinking, for one thing, and sternly forbade the presence of liquor aboard his keel-boat. But he exacted the maximum of work and obedience from the crew of twenty-five, from fifteen to twenty of whom formed the *cordelle*-hauling crew, while Bowers steered and the rest kept the eight-ton barge in the channel.

Once, when they were within two days of Muskogee, Clayborne saw the Bearcat in action. He had ridden on ahead with Scipio and both were fishing, waiting for the *Susy J.* to appear. A barge passed them close to sunset, its crew singing as they poled their way down-current and disappeared behind a sharp bend. The catch of catfish and perch had been heavy and Clayborne had tired of hauling them out. Scipio was stringing them through their gills when they heard shouting down-river. Scipio brought the mare, which stood with head thrown up, pricked ears and quivering nostrils, and Clayborne mounted, riding in the direction of the noise while the black, after putting the catch into the water, moored to a tree, followed him on foot.

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The bluff was high above the river, which ran crimson, reflecting the setting sun, two barges showing black on its surface. It was the rule of the river that a *cordelle* craft had the right of way in the tortuous and none too wide channels that prevailed. But the barge that had passed Clayborne had either ignored the rule or had been careless and unskilful for at the moment Clayborne arrived upon the scene it crashed into the *Susy J.* and drove her broadside on to a shoal. The sudden grounding had jerked the men on the tow-rope, who were on a path at the foot of the bluff, off their feet and sent them sprawling in confusion.

The Bearcat's bellow, charged with river vernacular, rose above the general row. He left his helm, unshipping the long tiller of ash and lunged along the deck of the *Susy J.*, flourishing his weapon and achieving a prodigious leap to the other barge, yelling to his own polers to stop trying to fend off and follow him.

The four of them grabbed their poles and essayed the jump. Two made it and two missed, plumping into five feet of water. The crew of the offending barge rallied to receive the boarding party, using poles as quarter-staves and spears. There were nine of them in sight when Bowers leaped and several more came pell-mell out of the after-cabin. In a moment there was a furious free-for-all, with odds of five to one against the men of the *Susy J.*

Clayborne, atop the bluff, was perforce a spectator. There was no possible way down the steep pitch with its soft red soil. The haulers of the *Susy J.* were already floundering and wallowing through the shallows, deep in soft mud, sometimes sinking to their hips, making slow progress, threatening the bargees with curses whose picturesqueness and aptness somewhat purged their blasphemy. The shouts echoed back and forth between the bluffs on either side of the river while the unequal, Homeric combat went on.

Against weight and numbers Bowers had retreated to the bows of the downstream keel-boat where he stood wielding his ashen club like a flail. One of the two men who had landed with him had been thrown into the muddy water; the second rolled from the gunwale, fiercely clutching an opponent. Though there were firearms aboard on both sides, none were discharged. Clayborne caught no sign of knife-blades or pistols. They fought according to the rivermen's code, roughly, regardless of odds, but with poles and seeps as the only weapons, the tillers reserved for the skippers. They appeared to combat for the sheer delight of it, out of the same exuberant mood that made them either buy drinks for everybody in a bar-room, or offer to clear out the place.

Bowers, fighting with a Berserker fury, was a wonder to behold. The eagerness of his opponents to get at him hampered their efforts; they tumbled over each other, reached across each other's holds, striving to get a substantial grip on Bowers, and time and time again he flung them off like a stanch old bear that is one moment almost smothered by the pack and the next stands free while a wounded dog slinks howling off.

As he fought, he roared inarticulately, a taunting war-yell—

"Yah-ah-ah-ah!"

Men clawed at him, grabbing his club, but he got clear and with a mighty swipe a bargee would go down with a cracked pate or a temporarily paralyzed arm. Bowers' back was against the rounded stem and they could only get at him in front. Clayborne saw a red-headed man dive under the rest for Bowers' knees. The Bearcat staggered and then two of his own men managed to climb over the gunwales, despite the pokes and jabs of poles. Slick as seals with water and mud, plastered with it, slippery as eels, they sliddered through the ruck and created a diversion.

They got away Bowers' tiller-club at last and threw it overboard but he kicked his legs free and backed by his *cordelle* men who had waded through shallows and channel and could no longer be denied, the Bearcat lowered his head and, with his two arms driving like pistons, broke through his enemies, literally scattering them as a well-rolled ball clears the alley of ninepins.

Only the red-headed one stood up against him and for a few seconds there was a lively go between the two skippers. There was small science but much vigor. "Red" got in a hard drive to Bowers' middle and the Bearcat let out a grunt

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that was heard above the shrill and clatter of the fight by Clayborne on the bluff. Bowers followed it with a smashing, spattering wallop on the nose and Red collapsed. The *cordelle* men, coated with the river muck, fairly chased the rest back into their cabin, captured the tiller, as symbol of victory, though that of the *Susy J.* had been retrieved, then, with lusty strokes of their poles, shoved the barge well up on a shoal and returned to the *Susy J.* triumphant.

For the first time Bowers saw Clayborne on the mare and Scipio, outlined against the flaming western sky, looking down. He waved a hand and shouted something unintelligible. His towing crew once more took to the water, shouldered the *Susy J.* back into the channel and then took up the rope again, hauling the barge on to the place that Bowers, who knew the river as a pedant knows every word and phrase of his favorite volume, had selected for the night camp. Clayborne, as he cut across to recover the fish, heard their song of victory shouted at the top of their lungs, tenors and basses in harmony, the sound growing fainter as he galloped across the bend:

"Says Cap'n Dick, 'Git out o' th' channel.'
Yo-ho, the roaring river!
Says Cap'n Jim, 'Don't yo' scrape my gun'le,'
Yo-ho, the mad Missouri!"

BOWERS was exultant that night. "I reckon I've l'arned thet muskrat Flynn a lesson," he said. "I squshed in his nose fer him, anyways. He'll look less human than ever. He's got the principles of a thievin' mink, the brains of a catfish and all the natcheral perfume of a skunk. He lies as his pulse beats an' he's been queerin' the Injun trade by cheatin'. Besides thet he sells 'em all the licker he kin lay hands on an' all the powder an' lead they ask fer.

"Thet sort of tradin' is goin' to lead to an uprisin' some of these days an' the river won't be a safe place for wimmen an' kids. Flynn's a bully what's got an idee thet he kin override anything on this river but I reckon he's changed what he figgers is his mind. Yes sirree!"

Muskogee passed, the character of the river changed. It still twisted but its general course was now more westerly, the width lessened, big timber showed on the banks, the channel was more plainly marked, flowing first to one side then hugging the other, sliding along in an even three feet of current.

"Good rains this Spring goin' to help us out," said Bowers. "If it keeps up this way, we'll get plumb to Osage, whar my holding is. We'll be passin' the mouth of the Cimarron termorrer. Thar's whar Kit Carson has his ranch, 'way up on the north fork, 'way to —— an' gone inter Mexico. I reckon it's a good country but li'ble 'most any day to git swep' out by Injuns. Day after termorrer we'll be to Osage, where we'll unload. 'Fore we go on by wagon to Bent's Fort it'll take a day or so to outfit an' I'd admire to have ye stay ter my house. Ye didn't know I was married, did ye?"

Clayborne gasped. Somehow he had never connected this river-rover with matrimony and he wondered what kind of mate he had chosen. An Amazon, he fancied, who could match word for word with her husband, perhaps blow for blow on occasion, who had wielded ax and hammer in aiding to build their lodge in the wilderness, who had tanned the leather for the breeches and belt of the Bearcat.

The Bearcat grinned a bit sheepishly.

"I'll be glad to meet her," said Clayborne.

"You bet yore life I will," returned Bowers heartily. Then his jaw dropped; his eyes lost their luster. "By gum!" he said with solemn intonation. "By gum, if I hain't gone and put myself inter a fine predickyment! I hain't got no more mem'ry bout the things I most want ter remember than a hibernatin' b'ar has about las' year's honey. Gol an' gosh dern it, now I am in a pickle!"

He looked, for all his fierce features, so absurdly like a small schoolboy that had forgotten an errand, that Clayborne chuckled.

"Thet's it," said Bowers, "larf an' larf yore fool head off! Sooner er later you'll get spliced yoreself and you'll understand. My wife is, ter me, like a hummin'-bird thet's married a buzzard. She's small an' showy, purty as a picter, made to admire an' cherish. But they's two birds, both of 'em little uns, thet, if they was only built a little bigger, would have the rest of bird-creation sittin' up an' waitin' for the chirp to move. Them birds is the

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king-bird an' the hummin'-bird—quicker'n a flash, more pluck than a wild bull in a tantrum.

"My wife—the boat's named after her—Susy Jennings as was, Susy Bowers as is—weighs ninéty pounds an' I weigh two hundred an' twelve. She's dainty as a wood-flower but she's killed two catamounts and one ba'r thet came snoopin' round the cabin, an' she convinced a couple of Choctaws that the neighborhood of our holding warn't healthy for Injuns. Ef she'd known how, I' believe she'd have scalped the one she shot, fer when she's warmed up to action, a regiment of hornets ain't more persistent, sudden or effective. No sirree!

"Me, I'd ruther walk plumb to Natchez an' back again than tell her I forgot what she ordered—special, mind ye. Though what in time she wants blue ribbons, narrer, an' a bolt of white muslin for, beats me. An' I bought everything else. Gol dern my consarned hide, thet Injun who passed us this mornin' in his canoe has told her by this time we're coming or blame me if I wouldn't go back an' git it!

"You've noticed I hain't drunk none sence we left?" he went on. "The original Susy J. don't believe in strong lickers, 'cept on birthdays and sech-like an' for medicine purposes. I—I don't discourage her none in the idee thet I subscribes to her principles, up-river or daown. The kegs I totes in is tradin' stock, mostly, and double-dern me if I din't go an' guzzle myself into a dumb fool thet forgets the one thing she wanted—the one thing she's goin' to ask me if I've brought first thing we land! It's a mighty good thing I've got you erlong as a guest or they'd be an early frost in Osage."

But Bowers did not appear to get the punishment he dreaded. His wife was a bright, bird-like creature with dark eyes and crimson lips and cheeks beneath her tan. Dainty, as he had said, vivacious and, despite her diminutive stature, quite capable of bravery, Clayborne thought. First she kissed the Bearcat, enfolded in his giant embrace, next she welcomed Clayborne, then she asked for the blue ribbons and the white muslin. Clayborne basely deserted Bowers at this juncture. Half an hour later the riverman sought him out.

"Wal, sirree," he said, "I feel worse then if she'd flayed me. What d'ye suppose she wanted thet stuff fer? An' me never guessin'. Remember I told ye thar might be two reasons fer me not goin' to Californy with ye? Susy J. is one an'—" he slapped Clayborne's knee with force enough to bruise it for days afterward—"t'other's Richard Washington Boone Bowers Juneyer. Yes sirree, Bob!"

His face glowed like the sun but Clayborne's leg hurt and he countered.

"How do you know it's going to be a boy?" he asked.

"Son," said Bowers solemnly, "you've met Susy J. What she sots her mind on she gits, sooner or later. She's sot her mind on a boy. She sends for blue ribbons becoz blue is a boy's color, so she sez, same as pink's a gal's color. If it was goin' ter be a gal, she'd have ordered pink. The event hain't goin' to happen fer a few months, but I couldn't get to Californy an' back afore then, an' I aim to be around and handy to Susy J. when her time comes. Yes sirree! I'll name t'other keel-boat after him, Juneyer. How d'ye spell out that word?"

WHILE Bowers prepared his wagon-loads of goods for trading at Bent's Fort, choosing articles that his experience told him would be likely to be out of stock at the Fort and also to appeal to any bands of Indians met *en route* Clayborne looked around for a mount for Scipio and also for weapons.

Bowers secured for him two Hawkins rifles with ammunition, sheath-knives, buckskin clothes, leggings and moccasins, blouses, shirts and prairie-hats—wide-brimmed articles of felt—also a typical plainsman's saddle made something on the Indian model, with a horn on the pommel and two cinches to aid in roping or dragging and a high cantle that made the seat almost as easy as that of a chair. This Bowers had traded from Mexicans. It was beautifully carved in fine leather and ornamented with silver, weighing about fifty pounds. It took time for La Belle Rose to become used to it, but eventually both she and her master acknowledged the good sense of the design for traveling long distances. A pack horse and saddle were easily secured.

To find a horse for Scipio was difficult. Strong though the cayuses were, interbred

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with wild horses of the plains, Scipio's weight was a drawback and a compromise was made in the shape of a rangy mule, capable of walking as fast as La Belle Rose and of unlimited endurance. It had streaks in its disposition that were eminently mulish but it was untiring and Scipio mastered it. He also was provided with a Mexican saddle, and Clayborne set him to shooting at a mark with the rifles, practising himself until he had become a judge of distance and of the trajectory of his Hawkins.

Scipio added a weapon to his armament in a backwoods tool, half ax, half hatchet, a long handle joined to a blade of the best steel, called an English half-ax. This Scipio carried on occasion suspended from his wrist by a leather thong and Clayborne often found him flinging it at tree trunks and stumps, developing a natural or inherited dexterity to expertness. The whirling weapon would travel too fast for the eye to catch more than a blur of light, and bury itself sixty feet away, wedged to the thickest portion of the blade in a cottonwood at the height of a man's skull from the ground. For all his undoubted respect for pistol and rifles, this ax was Scipio's favorite weapon. He looked upon the expedition as one of war and avowed his intention, as soon as they got clear of the settlements, of casting off superfluous clothing and reverting to the breech clout of the Indians.

For Mrs. Bowers, with her pluck and determination, Clayborne had conceived a sincere admiration. Given opportunity, she would make that big husband of hers travel far to success. And, shy at first to Clayborne's accent and polished manners, a real friendship had sprung up between them.

"I wish you all the luck in the world," Clayborne said as the little caravan was starting. "And I hope I shall soon see you again. I am going to try and persuade Bowers to bring the three of you to California before long."

The piquant face of Susy J. crimsoned but she looked at him bravely.

"Thank you, sir," she said, "for the three of us. It is going to be a boy, you know. His father and I would like to give him the best of chances—better than we have had. So we may come West. And the very best of luck to you, Mr. Clayborne."

On the fifth of August they arrived at Bent's Fort, set in a clearing among cottonwoods in a verdant valley, backed by distant mountains whose blue peaks seemed scarcely more material than the sky. Bowers pointed out the tents that clustered close by the river.

"Fremont's here, pardner," he said. "And he don't seem to be aimin' to start today, at any rate."

A compact body of some forty men, all mounted, were drilling in swift evolutions on a level strip. Back of the tents a corral had been built in which were oxen and mules. Outside the fence were several carts, hooped over and covered with canvas, styled by Bowers "prairie schooners." One man drilled the troop and dismissed it before Clayborne and Bowers arrived. Some of them dismounted; others rode off as if on an errand; one, shading his eyes, put spurs to his horse and came tearing through a cloud of dust, swinging his hat and calling out a welcome.

It was Basil Lajeunesse.

CHAPTER VIII

FREMONT

IT WAS five days before Clayborne could secure an audience with Fremont, even through the good offices of Lajeunesse. The expedition of forty was handled with military precision, with drills and almost continuous shooting at marks, veterans though most of them were in Fremont's ways and used as all of them were to camp and field. Among them were several Indians, Delawares, who camped apart. Clayborne watched them with interest—wiry, lean men, excellent horsemen, burned by sun and wind so that many were blacker than the Delawares or the friendly Indians that hung around the Fort. Their hair was long, below their shoulders, most of them with unshaven beards, clad in buckskins, all with a certain rollicking air that bespoke *camaraderie*, good-natured, often singing, already divided off after dark into regular watches with the morning watch acting as horse guard through the day, though there was no present need for such precautions.

Bowers did some satisfactory trading and so evidently itched to get rid of the remainder of his goods with certain nearby

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tribes and return to his Susy J., that Clayborne reassured him as to his own standing, of which he felt less certain as he noted the deftness, the subtle manner of experience that invested the followers of Fremont and made him feel a tyro in camp manners and methods.

The ease with which they roped their spirited mounts and subdued their buck-jumping, the speed with which they threw hitches about their pack animals, the marvelous accuracy of some of their shooting, left him every day less certain of ever acquiring a skill that had been born and bred in these "sons of the sun and wind," as Lajeunesse had described them. But Bowers saw him in close touch with the Frenchman and took it for granted that Clayborne would achieve his end. On the fourth day, Clayborne rode several miles with the Bearcat toward an Indian camp and parted with him in genuine friendship and regret.

"If this Californy turns out what you figger it will," said Bowers at the last, "don't be surprized to see Susy J. an' me an' Juneyer turnin' up. The big fur comp'nies are cuttin' inter my bizness an' I've got to keep on the frontier to make good."

Scipio had remained at the Fort, and alone Clayborne watched from a little rise the pitching wagons of Bowers's outfit traversing the gently rolling ground toward the river until nothing was to be seen but a cloud of dust, then turned the mare's head and rode at a canter on the back trail. The air was keen and crystalline. Far westward high mountains showed faintly, their bases blending with the slightly purple distance, here and there a snowy crest appearing like a hovering streak of cloud. The scent of wild sage was in his nostrils. A band of antelope swept by; prairie chickens and willow grouse whirred from beneath the mare's hoofs or scuttled between the clumps. All about was the free, wild horizon, untrammeled with fence, inhabited by roving bands of Indians, eminently the wilderness rolling up to the Rockies or down to the great rivers.

From here, north to the Platte, emigrant trains were creeping, bunched at night against the savages who resented their progress, dimly seeing what the usurpation of the white man meant as he crept on to Oregon or Upper California. One outfit had set out from the Fort only two days before—men, women and children, daring all hazards to find themselves land where they could set up a home and rear later generations to build up the civilization of which they were the pioneers.

A sturdy brood, these land-vikings, thought Clayborne, as he saw them go forth with their eager eyes set to the western sky, missionaries of progress, symbols of the spirit of the race—his race. A comtempt for all stay-at-homes grew in his heart—a derision of himself as he had lived and thought to live in pampered comfort. Manhood was self-made, he decided, not inherited, and surely here was the arena in which to prove one's self a man.

Two miles from the fort he put the still fresh mare to a gallop. A little band of horsemen were coming in his direction. As they neared him he recognized Lajeunesse beside the spare, active figure of Fremont and with them a man named Kern who was accompanying the expedition as artist and cartographer.

It was not the first time he had encountered the Pathfinder, riding his gray horse, not so large as La Belle Rose but a magnificent creature, full of life and pride, always moving rapidly, its master upright in his saddle and looking for the most part straight ahead. In Fremont's glance Clayborne had seen the same eager, westward look as that of all the emigrants—concentrated, alert, holding a set purpose. Sometimes it had flashed upon him and the mare and on Scipio astride his mule—a momentary gaze, brief, disinterested but keen. And, with a natural emotion, Clayborne had made the most of himself on such occasions, knowing his horsemanship superb, his mount almost perfection.

Lajeunesse had told him that he had not, would not inform Fremont of Clayborne's desire unless the Pathfinder directly asked him. He had spoken of their meeting on the Mississippi and Clayborne was assured that the Frenchman had lauded him sufficiently.

Now as Fremont's glossy, dappled gray, Sacramento, shrilled a greeting to the ruddy-hided La Belle Rose, and she whinnied an answer, arching her neck and rolling her lustrous eyes, her dainty fetlock slipped into the sloping hole of a prairie dog

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and she stumbled. Clayborne sprang from the stirrups and saved himself a fall and the mare a wrenching, but his face burned red as Fremont swept by, his face impassive but his glance taking in the incident. Clayborne caught a sympathetic hunch of Lajeunesse's shoulders and, after carefully examining the mare's ankle, remounted and rode on more slowly.

"We have much to learn, Rose," he said to her. "It takes a long time to acquire an instinct that others are born with."

He had formed a habit of joining the evening camp-fires where the voyagers messed in groups of seven and, in a measure, mainly by dint of being a gracious listener, he had been accepted by them. But he felt that they regarded him with tolerance, as an amateur, to use their own term, a "tenderfoot," and this evening he avoided the groups of jesting, smoking men discussing experiences common to all of them, or lying back with heads on saddles listening while one sang, perhaps joining in the refrain of some river chantey.

Scipio and he made a little camp together by the river, learning ways at which the black proved far more apt than he, little things that Clayborne had never deemed difficult, never having essayed them. Supper of a trout and two prairie chickens split and broiled above the glowing coals had been an eminent success, but Clayborne had lost his appetite and wandered off by the water. The song of some Canadians of the expedition came softly:

"Soon as the woods on shore grow dim,
We'll sing at Saint Anne's our evening hymn.
And, when the wind blows off the shore,
Oh, sweetly we'll rest the wearied oar."

The soloist sang in French, in a high pure tenor, and then came the harmonious chorus:

"Row, brothers, row: the stream runs fast,
The rapids are near and the twilight's past.
The twilight's past."

A man came out of the willows that fringed the tall cottonwoods and hailed Clayborne. It was Basil Lajeunesse.

"I have been looking for you, my friend," he said. "The Chief will see you. Carson has been sent for and we shall start as soon as he arrives. It is getting late and we have two ranges to cross before the snows come. I warrant we'll trail hard and fast. It takes three days to Taos. The messenger has been gone five days and Carson will not be long in keeping his promise. Come up to the Fort and luck be with you!"

CLAYBORNE found his heart pounding like a lad's as he walked to the interview. The Frenchman's tact omitted all reference to the incident of the prairie-dog's hole but it was vivid in Clayborne's mind when he was ushered into Fremont's presence in a room on the upper floor of the fort.

It was sparely furnished with a rough chair or two, a truckle-bed spread with blankets, and two tables, on one of which were strewn maps and papers while the other held Fremont's pistols, a pair of field-glasses and instruments for the determination of astronomical positions. A saddle lay in a corner.

Fremont sat at the table by the maps, his strong face half in shadow. A petroleum lamp was covered with a tilted shade but his features showed in strong relief. Clayborne saw closely for the first time the eagle-eyes, deep-set under shaggy brows, the hawk-like nose and the firm modeling of the jaw and mouth that a heavy beard and mustache could not disguise.

The Pathfinder's hair was thick and curly above a high, wide brow, trimmed at the neck and ears more closely than that of his men. There were fine lines of distance-gazing about the corners of the eyes, and two strokes running from his nostril to the ends of his mustache. His expression was alert and held nothing of the dreamer, save in that remote suggestion of a persisting, inward vision that ever dominated the eyes' immediate work —a suggestion of an ability to pierce beyond remote horizons. Here was the man of action, emphatic, brusk.

"You wanted to see me, sir?"

Clayborne stated his case briefly.

"Why do you wish to join me, sir? Why should you think I should wish to have you in my company?"

Clayborne had many times marshaled his thoughts for this interview. He spoke to the purpose, touching lightly on his own necessity for a migration to happier fortunes since he had lost his own, growing more eloquent as he talked of the possibilities of California and its part as new

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territory for the United States. He was aglow when he finished, conscious, as one may be, that his sincerity and sentiments had found a corresponding interest in his listener, though Fremont's face betrayed nothing but a polite gravity. Clayborne's spirits fell rapidly at the answer.

"You speak well, Mr. Clayborne," said Fremont. "I subscribe heartily to your patriotism and to your ambitions for our country, but you waste your eloquence in pleading a cause that you have wrongly premised. You assume the purpose of my mission from the rumors that are afloat and have been launched without authority. If—" and his voice took on a deeper tone and the inner light in his eyes glowed more strongly— "such remote possibilities as you speak of should come to pass and I should be so instructed as to take some active part in them, I should be happy.

"But I have no rank in the Army at present, sir; I am brevet captain in the corps of topographical engineers. The object of this expedition is wholly of a scientific nature. My men are citizens, employed by myself on wages and, with my Delaware Indians, intended solely for protection against savages and to procure subsistence in the wilderness and desert. No officer or soldier of the United States Army accompanies me nor am I under orders from the military arm.

"I regret that I can not use you, but many men, actuated like yourself with the desire for pioneering and the seeking of unknown lands, the zest for adventure and its risks, gallant Americans of a roving disposition, have endeavored to ally themselves with this expedition. Some of these have been friends, others introduced by those to whom I might be well disposed to grant any favor in my power. I have refused all these. I can not accept you.

"My men are all picked men, inured to hardship and experienced. I have made a steadfast rule, Mr. Clayborne, to admit none to my company until they have proven themselves. I have had my camp's safety endangered many times through acts of thoughtlessness caused only by lack of experience and I can not lightly take such hazards again. A brave spirit and good health is insufficient.

"You are a good horseman, yet your mount stumbled this afternoon, not being used to prairie dogs. I hear good things of you from Lajeunesse. You shoot well, yet twenty Indians might steal upwind upon you and fill you with arrows before you dreamed of pulling trigger. There are emigrant trains leaving here almost every week. You will get excitement enough with them, especially if you choose those that travel by this southern route.

"If you are still earnest in your desire to reach California, I advise you to join yourself to one of them. Perhaps we may meet in California. Perhaps occasion may arise for your militant spirit to aid in securing it for our country. I shall trust to see you again, sir, if you reach the coast. Look well to that fine horse of yours; she is handicapped as, indeed, sir, are you, though you may not be aware of it. I wish you luck."

He rose and said "Good night," reaching out his hand, which Clayborne took somewhat dejectedly. As he reached the door Fremont was buried in his maps and papers. Clayborne descended and went out beneath the stars. Lajeunesse was waiting for him.

"How went it, my friend?"

"I have an engagement with Fremont in California, if I reach there," said Clayborne. "And I am going to keep it. Good night, my friend, and thank you for your good words."

He could not keep the bitterness out of his voice and Lajeunesse made no attempt to accompany him.

"But I shall see you in the morning?" he called after him.

Clayborne did not answer but went straight to his camp. The mare whinnied.

"That is one habit I shall have to break you of, *ma belle*," said Clayborne as he cupped her soft nostrils. Scipio rose from the ground like a column of smoke.

"We leave at dawn, Scipio," said Clayborne. "Not with the expedition but to catch up with the emigrant train that left here two days ago. We should easily travel at double their speed. We shall ride light and find our meals as we go. We have only to follow the river."

Scipio was short and decisive in his answer.

"Good," he said, swathed himself in his blanket, lay down again and went instantly to sleep.

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But Clayborne sat up awake until the fire went out and the air grew chilly. In his sleep his jaw was set and, with a determination that was boyish as well as manly, he dreamed of meeting Fremont in California.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE CAÑON

THE Arkansas still ran through fairly level country though its banks came closer together and the current swifter with each mile. But the mountains loomed up ahead, changing constantly, now enticing, now forbidding. Through the sage and golden rabbit-brush, the latter now browning to early Autumn, ran a wagon trail straight for the great cañon of the Arkansas, gateway to the range. Droppings from the animals of the wagon train, the ash of their fires and once, early on the second morning, a band of timorous coyotes snatching at remnants of food, maintained their hopes of an early junction as Clayborne and Scipio rode along with their pack animal. They saw no buffaloes but bands of antelope were frequent. They saw no Indian sign.

The third day showed the right hand cliff of the gorge, apparently within two hours' ride, but by this time they were used to the deceptions of the atmosphere, and noon found them still some miles from where Clayborne hoped to find the train camped. He knew that the California trail branched to the left, over a bench, the main ridge ending abruptly in high unscalable precipices to the east. The Arkansas had no longer carried the red tinge of soil but ran sparkling and fretting, with trout lurking or leaping in the pools.

Scipio pointed out a thin column of smoke that rose against the cliff, hardly discernible to Clayborne's eyes. The wind was with their progress and the animals caught no scent of human encampment, though they mended their pace as if they shared in the haste of their riders. The sun sank crimson behind the hills and the mouth of the cañon was purple with shadows. The rushing stream sounded louder; dark shadows reached out from the west as they at last caught sight of the tops of wagons flushed pink with the evening glow.

Two or three of them were flapping in the wind that now blew down the gorge. The smoke had vanished and Clayborne thought it strange. As they drew closer there was no sound of voices though they could make out figures lying here and there. Even as the mare snorted and tried to bolt while Scipio's mule and the pack horse upreared, Clayborne felt the sudden sense of tragedy.

They rode up in silence, their weapons ready, forcing their mounts, knowing what had disturbed them—the scent of fresh-spilled blood. A horse, belly upward, its stiffening legs pointing to the sky, two arrows half buried in its side, prepared them for the horror.

There were five wagons in all and their disposition showed that the party had been taken by surprize before the vehicles had been arranged for the night to make an enclosure, within which the animals might be corraled, according to the universal emigrant custom. The Indians must have swooped down from the mountains in force, to judge by the scores of arrows that had penetrated the covers or stuck into the woodwork of the wagons.

The men of the party had seemingly taken up position underneath the wagon beds and fired from between the wheels. Puddles of blood showed ghastly in the lessening light, and they found traces where the dead men had been dragged out. Some had been killed in the open in the last struggle. Two broken rifles gave mute evidence of the final, desperate rally at close quarters.

Nine men lay here and there with limbs drawn up and twisted in the agony of despair or the sharp torture of the scalping knife before animation had departed. One lay with his head in the margin of the stream, which had washed away the blood and showed the savage mutilation in all its rawness. The legs of two or three had been disjointed by blows of the tomahawk.

But it was the wagons that held the worst sight. In them the huddled women and children had been massacred. Blood soaked the planks and the tossed-about clothing. One young girl had been dragged out and, after unthinkable desecration, left half naked. A little child had tried to run away and lay at some distance, asprawl a bush, an arrow deep between the tiny

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shoulders. Even its golden curls had been ravished for a trophy.

In the grim silence of the gorge, where the sun now made a red ribbon along the rim of the eastern escarpment, with only the rush of the river for a requiem, the tragedy seeped into Clayborne's soul. Here was the seamy side of bright adventure, the end of radiant visions, the fearful death of love and hope and ambition. Scipio stood silent, his black face rigid but a crimson fire in his eyes.

The raiders had evidently gone whooping off, driving the stock before them, bearing their dripping trophies, the weapons and such equipment as took their savage fancy. They did not seem to have carried off any captives; their blood thirstiness had spared the women with more merciful though appalling death. Far overhead in the strip of amber sky between the cañon walls a buzzard swung. Soon wild things would come down from the mountain and in from the plain to their ghastly feast.

"We must give them burial," said Clayborne. Scipio nodded.

They found some tools, carried by the emigrants to till the ground in the new country they would never reach, and with pick and shovel they dug in the softer places of the stony soil. They did not stop for food. The mare, the cayuse and the mule, picketed up-wind, shivering, and staring toward the scene, refused to graze. The moon came up and they toiled on until their hands were blistered, pausing for rest, alert for any sign or sound of Indians.

It was dawn before they hid in the friendly earth the last still form, without an uttered prayer but, white and black alike, with a petition in their hearts that was blended with a stern desire for revenge. They piled cairns of loose rock above the fresh earth and then, exhausted, forced themselves to brew coffee and broil some bacon, a side of which, with some flour, they found beneath a pile of clothes in a wagon.

Clayborne collected evidences of the identity of the party and such relics as might be delivered to relatives. He was still searching in the wagons when Scipio called to him in a low voice.

"Jus' stick yo' head out of the front end of the wagon, keepin' back of the coveh, an' look up at the top of the big cliff."

Clayborne did so. For several seconds he stared blankly. Then a figure came to the verge, tiny but distinct, two thousand feet above them, black against the morning sky, peering down into the cañon. The man was naked, or nearly so, without doubt an Indian.

"Where are you, Scipio?" asked Clayborne.

"Undeh the wagon. I don' know if he spotted me first or me him. I wiggled through the bushes like a snake. Betteh we get out of this, I think."

CLAYBORNE agreed with him. The Indian might or might not be a member of the murdering band. He might or might not have seen Scipio. He might be tempted to come down merely out of curiosity for the possible discovery of loot or to retrieve things that had been overlooked in the blood-lust of the raid. Where one massacre had taken place with many men to defend it, the killing of two men would be simple. To return along the plains toward Bent's Fort would invite destruction long before they could connect with Fremont's party, which might not start for a day or so. To stay in any exposed place where arrows could reach them would be fatal.

Clayborne rapidly arrayed their chances. Up-cañon the cliffs closed in so that, within a short distance, the surging stream occupied the entire floor. Across the torrent, the outline of the lesser, western cliffs seemed to indicate a break in their escarpment. This appeared to be the wide and comparatively low-walled ravine through which flowed an affluent of the Arkansas, up which and across a bench-land to the north ran the trail that Lajeunesse had mentioned. In any case their position was desperate. If the watcher on the cliff had not seen them he might yet be able to view the animals, well hidden in the willows, but not from a bird's-eye view.

"There's no sense in staying here," said Clayborne after he had slid over the tail-board of the wagon and joined Scipio. "The best chance to me seems to be a trip up that ravine across-stream. We may be able to find cover there where they won't be able to shoot down upon us.

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It's a slim hope, but we may outguess them."

"This is no place fo' a fight," said Scipio, speaking with the authority of a proven warrior rather than a recently freed slave. "Too many places where they can git above us. Throw rocks down from that big cliff; shoot from the western side. I heard them talkin' at the Fort 'bout the way them Injians fight. All sides to once an' shootin' arrows jus' like it was rainin'.

"Bes' chance we got, Misteh Clayborne, is to fin' a pile of rocks, else a cave where they jus' natcherly got to come to close quahtehs. Stan's to reason they can shoot arrows fasteh than we can load an' fire but, if they eveh fin' me where they can't git to my back an' I can use my li'l ax, I'll shuah make them think they ain't welcome."

They essayed fresh glimpses but saw no further sign of Indians. Collecting their weapons swiftly, they hurried into the willows and saddled, mounting and fording the swift stream, keeping in the willows again on its farther side. Scipio had annexed a couple of double-bitted axes from the wagons, declaring them just the thing for in-fighting, and they took along the provisions they had found.

Clayborne acknowledged the black's logic in trying to force any attack to close quarters and he was glad to see the breadth of the ravine that opened to the west, with a slender stream of water joining a series of pools in the midst of it.

They rode along at a good pace, keeping an eye for possible places of defense in case they had been followed. The cliffs on either side showed lateral gulches that might lead up to the tableland across which ran the Overland Trail, but Clayborne was not bothering so much about the road to California as present concealment. Trees and lower growth were fairly plentiful, and they kept among these as much as possible.

Later in the day, as soon as the mounts showed signs of tiring, Clayborne meant, if they were unmolested, to make camp where men and beasts could feed and rest and then strike back, circling to south and east, coming out on the plains some distance from the mouth of the great cañon, and working back toward the Fort. They would have to wait over for another emigrant train. This was the only way they could get to California. Alone, forced to water and forage whenever the regular route offered opportunity, they would infallibly share the fate of the emigrants they had buried. Clayborne had no idea of turning back. Scipio showed no signs of lack of determination. But it was very evident that Fremont's statement that his band of forty was necessary for protection was not an idle one.

They had ridden for nearly an hour when Clayborne, halting in a little grove of cottonwoods and looking back for any sign of pursuit, saw white puffs of smoke rising in regular intervals from the hills above the southern wall of the ravine. He crossed through the trees and, to the north, heading them, was answering smoke. He turned to Scipio but the black had already seen the vapor and caught its significance. The hunt was on.

TO REMAIN where they were would be foolish. While the trees gave them some cover, they would furnish more to the redskins who could surround them and shoot their arrows from all sides.

Clayborne had noted a short distance back, a side-gulch that appeared to end abruptly in what was termed a box-cañon and in the closing wall at its end he had marked a blotch of shadow in the shape of an inverted V. It looked as if it might be the entrance to a rift or cavern in which they could make a stand and where, more important still, they might place their mounts back of them. He figured that they might barricade the entrance with boughs and rocks—driftwood was plentiful from Spring and Winter freshets—and, shielded from arrows, hold off the Indians by a deadly fire or, if forced to come to close quarters, give such a good account of themselves as might compass a respite if not a total repulse.

He was sure that the wagon route, the trail which would be ultimately followed by Fremont, led up the ravine they had traveled. The rusty tire of a wagon, passed a little distance back, gave evidence of that. He outlined the plan to Scipio and the black nodded comprehendingly. He was a first-class fighting man, thought Clayborne as Scipio grinned at him, his eyes flashing, his nostrils agape with the prospect of the encounter.

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Water was the first consideration; then a swift dash for the box-cañon and the cleft. The stream ran close by the roots of the cottonwoods that, in flood time, must grow on an island of dirt and gravel, stiff enough to resist the torrent, though other clumps had succumbed and the trees lay prone with the limbs bleached and dead. Scipio took their canteens and lowered them by the straps until they were filled with fresh water from a pool.

They mounted and emerged cautiously from the grove. No Indians were in actual sight, but two more broken columns of smoke showed that they were alert and gathering. Still, if they could hold out for a day or two at the most, perhaps only a few hours, they might be sure of rescue. All depended on the speed with which Carson answered Fremont's messenger to Taos.

They turned up into the rocky *cul de sac*. It extended back some two hundred yards from the main ravine, closed in on three sides by water-worn cliffs some hundred and fifty feet in height. Moist mud showed where a stream had lately failed, and Clayborne hoped that they might find the heading of a spring near the cave; if luck was with them, actually within it.

The rift looked promising. Water had washed out the loose dirt from between tilted formations, leaving a deep cavity. The rock inside was moist with tricklings. The height was sufficient to allow them to ride in unsaddled but they dismounted and Scipio went ahead. The black came back smiling. The cave widened out to one side, he announced, forming a chamber back of the preliminary passage where the three animals could be stowed in safety, from even glancing arrows. They led them in, leaving on their bridles and saddles in case of a swift emergence. Their little stronghold commanded a clear view of the main ravine. They could watch for friend or foe.

Clayborne, satisfied so far with his generalship, felt that the situation was easing up. Under his directions Scipio started dragging up such wood as he could find and, with the aid of loose rocks, piling up a wall of defense, leaving interstices through which they could fire while crouching for protection. Clayborne hastily gathered for their mounts all the grass in sight. Some still grew green and rank in little patches along the course of the drying rivulet; more, dried and brown, already seeded, he harvested under the shadow of the western wall. It was not much but, with the oat rations the beasts had had of late, it was enough to enable them to hold out for a day or so. There was water, scanty but fairly sufficient, collecting here and there in tiny rock basins from where it percolated through the rock and dripped and trickled down.

Ammunition, he decided, they must be chary with, and he told Scipio not to discharge rifle or pistol without being certain of his aim. The black pointed to the double-bitted axes he had brought along and tapped the battle-ax that was in his belt.

"I put my main trus' in them," he said. "Jus' let them come inside the sweep of my ahm an' I'll shuah make them hesitate."

The grass gathered, Clayborne helped pile up the barricade. Appreciating the value of the keen axes if a rush should come, he kept the work lower than he intended. He did not want to give the Indians the advantage of leaping down upon them from a height once they gained a footing.

The effectiveness of firearms at longer range was sadly limited by the time taken to reload. In that, the bows and arrows of the redskins held advantage. And he knew that some of the tribes had been fairly well supplied with guns, powder and lead by the reckless traders that Bowers had spoken of so bitterly.

There came a mind-straining wait. The possibility of their not being discovered was too slight to be considered. Their trail had been too plain, if they had not actually been sighted. Scipio had squatted down and was crooning a strange jargon to which he swayed back and forth with his eyes closed. Clayborne imagined that both rhythm and words were martial, the half-remembered remnant of a primal war-chant.

Then the black did a strange thing. He stripped off all his clothes and stood naked, a magnificent figure of a man, evenly and strongly developed. Between the great rocks that formed the cave were patches of whitish soil and this Scipio moistened with water to a stiff paste and applied the pigment to his face, daubing white circles

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about the eyes and lips to give him a demoniacal appearance. He completed his battle-toilet by adding white splashes to his chest and ribs.

He stood leaning on the double-bitted ax, his pistols and half-ax handy on a near-by ledge, his rifle against the side of the cave. In the dusk his black eyes held a greenish glaze that changed to crimson as he shifted his head in the light. His head was up, his great chest expanded and his stalwart legs apart. Scipio had leaped the generations. He was a Masai chief. His teeth gleamed white in a sudden grin.

"Now let them come a-runnin'," he said.

THE sun was high; the shadows gradually retreated from the gulch, but it was cool in the cave. They lit a fire and made themselves a better meal than that of the morning, broiling rabbits and washing them down with coffee. There was not much wind and what there was blew in from the main cañon, making them choke a little, and the beasts uneasy. But these were small discomforts and, after their stomachs were full and the animals watered and given a part of the fodder, both felt the fitter for what might lie before them.

It was two hours since they had first seen the signal smokes. Clayborne wound his watch and found it noon. The tension gathered and both filled pipes and smoked silently.

Then a swiftly moving figure flashed past the head of the gulch—a naked Indian on a calico pony, white, with copper splashes. He did not look their way but streaked on silently across the opening. Minutes passed before another followed but with the second came a troop at a gallop. Some of these wore war-bonnets of eagles' feathers with red streamers that flowed far beyond the flanks of their horses. Gun-barrels gleamed and spear-heads showed in dazzling bursts of white light. It seemed impossible that they could have overlooked the trail; more likely, Clayborne decided, they were first following it to the cotton-woods or riding to meet a party coming from the opposite direction.

Suddenly the entrance to the gulch was blocked with a medley of wild horsemen, riding close-packed at first to spread in open order, yelling and urging on their horses. They seemed resolved to charge right up to the closing wall, so hard and fast they came brandishing their weapons, sounding their ululating cry.

Fifty yards from the cave the savage troop halted, the ponies' unshod hoofs plowing up the sand and gravel. A shower of arrows rattled on the rocks or streaked into the cave opening, some falling short. Then the troop wheeled as Clayborne and Scipio fired. One warrior slumped on his horse and two others closed in, supporting him. A pony shied and went lame.

"Betteh you shoot the rifles an' I'll load," Scipio suggested.

Clayborne aimed with open sights as the black handed him the rifle and brought down another man. Once more the band wheeled and galloped in, this time separating into two columns that raced to the end of the gulch and swept at top speed past the cave, the fierce faces glaring in as they sought to locate their quarry, discharging their arrows and rifles at random.

From the lee of the barrier, resting on their elbows and firing upward through the openings they had left, Clayborne and the black discharged their pistols at pointblank range. A pony fell, his rider sent headlong to the ground, where Clayborne shot him with his second pistol. Scipio also accounted for one this time, the ball going through the Indian's head, though the redskin maintained his seat until the two columns were tearing for the main ravine a hundred yards away.

The Masai leaped up erect and shouted out a booming war-cry, a mighty "*Ya-a-ah!*" of exultation and defiance that made the galloping warriors turn their heads and gaze in astonishment at the strange figure, savage as themselves, that mocked them. Clayborne ordered him to crouch and clutched at his leg to enforce his order as bullets came singing toward them.

"They know we are only two now," he said. "They'll attempt different tactics."

"Cos' 'em fo' men to fin' out," gloated Scipio, reloading the rifles.

The columns were coming back again, one along each wall. But now they did not charge simultaneously. The advance troop included all those who had firearms, the remainder bearing bows.

They swerved to cross the cave, firing fast, each man, as soon as he had sped

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bullet or arrow, disappearing on the off-side of his pony and presenting only a heel and a hand twined in the pony's mane as a mark.

The Indians must have known that none of them had reached a target and it was soon evident that they intended the charge merely as a distraction, for the second column had dismounted and with clubs and tomahawks sprang for the barricade.

Clayborne and Scipio had reloaded and fired their charges in rapid succession, wounding two and killing one, but a score of leaping devils were on them, undismayed, and they grasped the two-edged axes and stood up to the task.

There was just room enough for them to swing their weapons side by side. The Masai sent out his war-cry as his blade bit deep into the skull of a bonneted chief and flashed out again, its brightness partly dulled. Clayborne's first stroke sheared through a stabbing spear and sank into the redskin's body just above the hip. The steel sliced through the soft flesh of the belly and gouged out its contents. It swung up and down again on the backstroke through the shoulder of a second whose lunging body fell upon Clayborne and shielded the brunt of a blow from a club that might have ended him then and there. Somehow he got from under and found himself dealing smashing blows at an Indian who had got inside the cave and dodged with cat-like quickness as he tried to drive home his tomahawk.

Scipio's shouts and the yells of the attacking Indians reechoed in the cave. It was a furious mêlée with the Masai desperately plying his ax to cover Clayborne, who had grounded his man with a side-swipe that caught him unprepared, lopping through the thigh as if it were a soft-wood bough.

Clayborne fell on him, clutching the hand that held the tomahawk, dropping his own ax and freeing his sheath-knife to sink it deep into the warrior's neck, even as the savage tried to tear at Clayborne's forearm with his teeth.

When he arose, panting, soaked with blood, the cave-mouth was clear and Scipio stood there, leaning on his ax, his deep chest rising and falling fast but retaining breath enough to sound his taunting chant. Blood poured from a flesh wound near his shoulder, scarlet on the black skin. One foot was on the body of the redskin that Clayborne had gutted.

THE toll at close quarters was five dead or gasping out their last breaths and, outside the barricade, two more who strove to writhe away, each with a leg severed below the knee by Scipio's ax when he had cleared the barrier. The place reeked with the scent of blood; in the back the mare, the pack cayuse and the mule were snorting and plunging in terror.

Clayborne glanced at Scipio. He was conscious himself of a strange exaltation, but the Masai was drunk with blood-lust, singing the song that had come down to him from his sires, eager to renew the fight. The wall had tumbled down in places under the charge, but the Indians were no longer to be seen. He called to the black to repair the barrier and reload while he soothed their animals but Scipio gazed at him blankly for a moment and then turned his face again to the gulch, his deep bass booming out gutturals.

Clayborne managed to coax La Belle Rose, the pack horse and the more stolid mule back to trembling ease, comforted by the knowledge of their masters' proximity, and then returned to recharge the rifles and pistols. Scipio was flinging the bodies of the dead outside the cave and Clayborne saw that he had scalped two of them, tying the long locks with their bloody patches of skin together with a knot of their joint ends. Then he calmly vaulted the barrier and, carrying with him his knife and his single-blade ax, brained both the wounded men and added their hairy trophies to his bundle.

He arranged this in a coil about the crimsoned blades of the larger ax, leaning this against the wall, and squatted down before them on his haunches, swinging his body from side to side and singing long strings of syllables that he seemed to improvise, rising from low croonings to full-volumed notes, diminishing again to whispers.

Clayborne watched him at intervals while he gave his main attention to where the gulch opened to the ravine. There horsemen occasionally raced back and forth but did not venture to enter again the little cañon that had proven so disastrous to them. He marveled at Scipio's

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ferocity. He himself had fought with all his might and had known a certain fierce glory as the blows thudded home or he pitted his own strength against the straining muscles of the savage.

But with the black, it seemed as if the dammed-up fight-desire of years had broken loose, not to be checked by the death of his enemies. Yet he had not gone so far as the Indians, Clayborne reflected. He had not mutilated the bodies, beyond the taking of their scalps. And he was a great fighting man.

All was wonderfully quiet again in the gulch. Only the horsemen, persistently flitting back and forth at its exit, showed that the redskins were still determined to avenge their repulse. Clayborne wondered if they thought to starve them out or hoped that they would make a sortie.

A speck appeared high in the sky, followed by another and then another. The buzzards had sighted the feast and planed in great circles, patient and cautious. Flies gathered and buzzed above the corpses. As Clayborne started to readjust the barricade he picked up an arrow that had fallen on the cave floor and noticed how beautifully it was made, the barbed point of flint as hard and sharp as steel, the long shaft scraped and polished, the feathers truly placed, infinite pains spent over weapons wasted as if they had been pebbles. His opinion of Indian marksmanship waned. They had thrown away arrows and bullets when no target was in sight. Hand-to-hand he and Scipio had matched them successfully. Their main superiority lay in surprize and numbers. He began to feel confident of holding out until Fremont arrived. They had water. At a pinch the gallant mare could carry double, though Scipio afoot could beat her in a day's travel.

He completed the breastwork and turned to Scipio, remembering his wound. The black had ceased singing and was now hunkered down before his scalps and the ax as if they constituted a fetish. His eyes were closed, his features placid. He started at the touch of Clayborne's hand. The whites of his eyes were bloodshot but the madness had gone out of them.

He stared at Clayborne in amazement. The latter was a gory-looking object.

"Betteh you lie down," exclaimed the black. "You mus' be chopped to pieces!"

"It isn't my blood, Scipio. I'm not even scratched. I want to look at that wound of yours."

Scipio glanced at it contemptuously.

"That ain't a wound," he said. "Them red men couldn' huht me. I jus' natcherly scared 'em stiff while I cleavered 'em. An' you shuah got in yo' licks. I guess if Cap'n Fremont saw this fuss he'd be pow'ful sorry he didn't commandeer us in his comp'ny. Don' you worry none 'bout that l'il slash, Mistah Clayborne. Cool me off to lose a l'il blood."

Clayborne washed the place, made a compress of his handkerchief and bound it up, much to the black's disgust.

"What were you singing about, Scipio?" he asked.

"Me? I was jus' talkin' to my axes. Mighty lucky we brought them along. They shuah are handy weapons. I tol' that ax that he had treated me right an' I was goin' to feed him mo' blood befo' we got to California. You an' me got to soht out them scalps, bimeby, Mistch Clayborne. Some of em's youahs, three or fo' of 'em for certain. Goin' to be hahd to 'dentify which is which, but I reckon a scalp's a scalp. Count up like the stripes on a sergeant's ahm."

"What language were you singing in? I never heard you use it before."

"That's my own talk—Masai talk. I always spoke some of it but it jus' natcherly come back to me all of a sudden. Do you reckon them Indians is goin' to ride back an' fo'th till they tiah out their hawsses?"

"I don't know. I do know that every minute we gain helps us. I am afraid they are up to some fresh deviltry and are doing that riding to keep us from finding out what it is they are planning."

"Mebbe they goin' to wait for night to come."

"I don't think so," said Clayborne. "I have heard they hardly ever attack after dark."

"We'll be waitin' fo' them," muttered Scipio, picking up the scalps and surveying them curiously. "They ain't no back entrance to this cave," he went on. "I made shuah of that. Yo' mare an' my mule an' that pack horse didn't git huht?"

"No."

Scipio put down the scalps and took up his ax.

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"Wish there was a grindstone or a whetstone handy," he said. "Got a notch on one side where I hit the rock afteh I sliced one of them Indian's legs. How 'bout a ration of wateh, Misteh Clayborne?"

They drank carefully and then Scipio got restless.

"Betteh I go take a look outside," he suggested. "I've got a shuah 'nough notion they's somethin' stirrin'."

There seemed no great danger and Clayborne let him go, warning him to be cautious. He went only a little way before he returned, leaping the wall.

"Some of 'em on top the cliff," he announced. "Seems like they was gatherin' somethin'—berries mebbe. I couldn' see plain befo' they dodged back."

To and fro went the patrol at the gulch's end, too fast to waste a shot at such swiftly moving targets. Still nothing happened. The sun was declining and the little cañon was already in a shadow that extended across the floor and half-way up the eastern cliff. But the main ravine where the horsemen rode was in brilliant sunlight. The wind had strengthened and now blew strongly into the cave.

SUDDENLY a flaming bundle came falling down from above—a bunch of birch and aspen bark, dried twigs and slivers of pitch pine tied together. Others followed in rapid succession. Mounted warriors once more poured into the gulch and sent arrow after arrow into the cave mouth, with an occasional bullet.

In an incredibly short time a pile of blazing fuel had assembled. Dismounted Indians, hugging close to the cliffs on either side of the rift out of the angle of bullets, tossed on the fire the inflammable stuff thrown down to them by their fellows who had climbed the cliffs hours before to gather, not berries, but tinderwood, bushes of sage and other growths that, fanned by the breeze, sent crackling sparks and dense volumes of pungent, choking smoke into the cave.

Blinded and choked, Clayborne and Scipio were almost powerless. To approach close to the barricade scorched and blistered them, singeing their hair. The driftwood they had piled for their own protection had caught, and the flames were steadily fed, and topped by the green brush that made the smoke unbearable. The fire sputtered and roared, screening off their enemies.

Scipio tore off his bandage and Clayborne ripped the sleeve from his shirt. Soaking the cloths as best they could in the little puddles, reserving their canteen supply, they tied them about their mouths. The devilish ingenuity of the thing had been so swiftly carried out that they had been unable to devise any means to offset its commencement and now suffocation seemed inevitable.

"Lie down," shouted Clayborne. "The air is better near the floor. I am going back to the animals."

He started to crawl through the smoke to where the mare and pack horse were neighing for help and the mule discordantly sounding its alarm. Before he could reach them, they came plunging out, crazy with the heat and smoke, wild with terror, rushing for the entrance. Clayborne was trampled down as he attempted to rise. A hoof struck him and he lost consciousness.

CHAPTER X

AN INDIAN HOLIDAY

CLAYBORNE and Scipio entered the Indian village ignominiously, mounted on scrub Indian ponies, their wrists lashed behind them, their ankles fastened beneath the horses' bellies, their heads toward the horses' tails as befitted captives. A war-bonneted chief bestrode La Belle Rose, and Scipio's mule and the pack horse were driven with the spare horses of the warriors who had been killed.

Both the captives strove to keep their heads erect, their gaze unfaltering. Clayborne's head throbbed madly from the blow of the mule's hoof; Scipio's face was puffed where the fire had scorched it before the three maddened beasts had broken down the breastwork and left an opening through which the redskins had entered the cave, as soon as the fire had died down, to secure their prisoners.

To Clayborne the fact that they had not been dispatched at once held no suggestion of mercy, but rather a threat of torture. They had sent several braves to the Happy Hunting Grounds, therefore the more elaborate their death, the

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more honor to the dead and the greater delight to the living. What he had learned of Indian lore, picked up from the tales of Lajeunesse and Bowers, suggested that he and Scipio were to be butchered, as slowly as possible, to make an Indian holiday.

He knew nothing of the jargon spoken by their captors; understood nothing of the taunts and threats they flung at him and Scipio and, while he gained their respect for his apparent indifference, for the Indians did not doubt that he knew some words of their tongue, as did all the whites with whom they had come in contact, they thought up the most ingenious and diabolical ways to break down the manhood of this white man and this black. Brave men both and good fighters, they should be brave to die and furnish much sport and spectacle.

Though Clayborne could not guess it, the village consisted of a temporary alliance of three tribes, sometimes joined for mutual benefits in warfare treaties, on big hunts, or for the exchange of goods. These were the Cheyennes, the Arapahos and the Ogallala Sioux. There was always jealousy brewing between the chiefs. There were three of these and but two prisoners with but two scalps. The division was impossible and the decision to make a community triumphal pageant with the white man and the black in the principal rôles of victims was both inevitable and satisfactory.

The lodges of the tribes were pitched in scattering fashion to form an irregular street a hundred and fifty feet wide, the teepees separated into three clusters. The Arapahos predominated.

Near the lodges of the warriors were set up tripods formed of slender poles of birch, scraped very clean. To each of these were affixed a white and spotless shield, a spear with a metal point burnished bright and some other weapon. They looked like the stands arranged outside the pavilions of a medieval tourney, awaiting the lance-touch of a challenger. Doubtless they had their code and rules of chivalry, thought Clayborne, though he and Scipio were not likely to witness any observance of them.

The street ran down to a stream that flowed eastward in a grassy plain between rocky ridges clad with pine and aspen. They arrived in the lingering twilight between sunset and dark, and cooking fires were already lighted. These were deserted and the street was thronged by squaws and children, eager to catch sight of the prisoners and revile them. The widows of the dead men set up a wailing as soon as they heard the news or noted their men's riderless horses. They advanced threateningly upon the captives until they were driven off, pacified by some announcement that Clayborne guessed to be an offer to these disconsolate squaws of a special opportunity for revenge. They were dragged from their mounts, their ankles rebound, and flung into a stinking teepee. Strips of dried meat were thrown to them and then they were left alone.

Frontier anecdotes are always redundant of narrow escapes or of tragedies, and details are never missing when the yarns are spun to tenderfeet. It is an excusable and generally harmless practise, and both Clayborne and Scipio remembered every bit of talk they had heard concerning Indian torture. That it would be a cat-and-mouse method Clayborne never doubted—a lingering procedure that would give entertainment to the whole village from the curs to the chiefs. If they quailed they would be turned over to the squaws for a horrible and debasing ending. If they stood firm they had little to gain but, between two evils, the one thing to do stood out prominently—to die like warriors.

Clayborne wondered whether he would stand it as well as Scipio. It was pitch black in the teepee but Scipio was chanting in a low and steady voice some resurrected remnant that was doubtless the correct Masai ritual for a chief in the hands of his enemies. And the white man strove to strengthen his own spirit. He had more imagination than the black—a more intense nervous system; he had heard more of the torture details, the pitch-splinters stuck in the flesh and lighted, the tests by knife and arrow, the roasting at a stake or on a bed of coals, bound to the spokes of a wagon wheel. He tried to dismiss the pictures aroused by his thoughts, to concentrate on other things.

There was yet some slim chance of hope. Fremont's scouts might have found the graves beside the wagons; they would know that Clayborne and the black had

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gone ahead to overtake the train. Lajeunesse would make every effort to save them if he thought them in danger. The signs at the cave could be easily read and the Delawares would easily trace those leading to the village. All hinged on Carson. Clayborne felt they had a respite until morning. Tonight there should be a dance, according to what he had heard. The ordeal would be reserved for the next day.

The flap of the teepee was thrown back and a weird figure appeared. The medicine men of the three tribes had come to survey the material for the savage rites. One wore buffalo horns, another a bear's head with the snout masking eyes and forehead. The third's scalp was covered by a bladder painted with designs in red and blue. All held flaming torches that showed their strange attire, decked out with armlets of shell and beads, fur and metal, beaded plastrons across their chests, necklaces of teeth, attachments that rattled and tinkled as they moved and shook their magic amulets. Their fierce, cruel faces were smeared with vermilion.

They made a callous, close examination of their prisoners, thrusting the torches close, appraising their endurance. They left as silently as they had come, without a grunt of approval or depreciation.

Within a few minutes two warriors entered with bowls of stew, either dog or horse—mule perhaps; but the captives were not dainty. Their hands were temporarily loosened and they ate heartily. A calabash of some berry brew was given each of them, cool to the palate, warm to the stomach, invigorating and mildly intoxicating.

Here was no pity, only an endeavor to get the game into good condition for the morning's sport. So it was offered, so it was accepted. And, pinioned as they were, both men managed to drop asleep. Both were returning to the primitive, learning to endure and master circumstance.

Sleep did not come immediately and it was broken at intervals. Whenever they awoke they heard the steady beat of drums and the chant of the warriors as they leaped about the fires. "*Hi-yahs*" rose to shrieks and died down at intervals from sheer vocal exhaustion, when they could hear the wailing of the women for their dead. Even when dawn filtered through the top of the teepee the lamentations continued.

Once more the medicine men visited them and once more they were fed. This time the wizards spoke to them, and, when they did not answer, their apparent stoicism evidently pleased. The *shaman* with the buffalo horns pointed a brown finger, first at Clayborne and then at Scipio, with an exclamation and two words of English.

"Ugh! You brave!" It was intended as a compliment— and an epitaph.

OUTSIDE their prison teepee the Indian village awoke. There was a hum and buzz, even among those self-sufficient and seldom voluble redskins, that betokened the arrival of a day out of the common. Squaws chattered and dogs barked or howled when their efforts were rewarded with kicks. From the corral where the ponies were under guard of the boys, came whinnies and neighs.

Clayborne had thought a good deal during the night concerning the fate of La Belle Rose, bestridden by a savage and demanding master, half fed, cruelly used until she picked up the ways of her rider, doomed at last to lug a *travois* for squaws, hauling the camp baggage, underfed and often starved until she became a moving bag of bones and at last, too skinny for consumption, too valueless to waste powder on, left to lie among the hills, watching with glazing eyes the buzzards who waited upon the wolves that would come with nightfall.

The mare was an aristocrat and a beauty, high-spirited and temperamental, gallant as she was swift and willing. Old age for such as La Belle Rose was intended to be honorable retirement in a lush meadow and a quick and painless death, a burial by some running stream where the chemicals of her body should fertilize the soil and resurrect in sweet grass-blades and clover, giving strength to some rollicking, well-born colt or filly, living again in happy transmigration. If only he could have shot her! He wondered where she was and, when they led him out of the teepee, stripped of every vestige of clothing, unbound, but with his arms grasped by braves who handled him with a *jiu-jitsu* deftness, his first glance was for her.

He saw her and she whinnied to him from where, with the war-ponies of the

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warriors, she was tied by a hair nose-halter to a rope of hide stretched taut between two trees. The horse guard was absent; the entire village, save the tiniest of encased pappooses, was out for the sport.

Clayborne knew what the first number on the program was to be. Bowers had told him of it and he recognized the preparations. He and Scipio were to run the gantlet. The warrior who, in fluent and descriptive pantomime, outlined their part in it, was unnecessary.

Scipio and he were placed at the beginning of a double column of savages armed with clubs, sticks and tomahawks. It stretched out for almost three hundred yards, starting with children, next the half-grown lads, then the maidens, squaws and the widows, eager to avenge their husbands killed by the pair who were presently to race for life down that alley of painted, screeching Indians. Sanctuary was supposed to lie at the far end if they could reach it, but Clayborne knew that this was only a mock-bait of mercy and that they would be reserved for other sports if they survived.

Clayborne had fed well and slept. He was in the best condition that he had ever known in his life. The buffet from the mule had left no lasting results. In younger days he had been the fleetest of his companions. As for Scipio, if ever a man had a chance of winning through such buffeting by speed and agility, he was the one, thought Clayborne, as he glanced at the black's deep chest and flexibly thewed and sinewed limbs. White and black, they made a notable pair.

There was admiration, paired with anticipation of good sport, in the glances bestowed upon them by the three chiefs, too dignified to take place in the line, but standing apart on a little knoll to witness the race down the red lane of death. The farther the prisoners went, the better would be the sport, the greater the excitement. The chiefs, like many groups who stood awaiting the word, gambled on the outcome. Odds were offered on the black; the white man was accorded even chances.

Clayborne looked for a chance to seize a weapon but the warriors who held them were unarmed. The first fifty yards were taken up by youngsters provided only with stout sticks and, back of them, braves protected against any sudden break.

It was perfect weather, far too fair a day to die battered down on the crisp turf. Somewhere, perhaps not very far away, Fremont might be marching, but their chances of rescue were infinitesimal in the face of that impatient horde. They had only their own efforts upon which to rely.

There were loud guttural exclamations from the Arapaho chief, a general straightening of the line, taunts flung toward them, grimaces, gestures indicative of the shrewd blows to be struck.

Clayborne sized up the situation swiftly and inspiration came to him. There were no patrols, save those back of the children and lads. The women, even more vindictive than the braves, were to be trusted to keep the partly spent runners in line when they reached them, and their clubs had been borrowed from the men's armament. The track sloped slightly down toward the stream that flowed on to join the upper waters of the Arkansas. They were in a bowl rimmed by the wooded hills.

To make a dash, to die fighting in the open, not clubbed to insensibility with the stake awaiting them when they recovered or, if not, the mutilation of the squaws—that was Clayborne's determination, backed by a hope he had no time to mention.

"The first two men to the right—beyond the women," he whispered to Scipio. "One ahead to take the second man. Then ——"

He was rudely cut off. They were led to where the youngsters danced eagerly, brandishing their sticks. Then they were faced toward the stream and given violent shoves that nearly sent them sprawling. Clayborne did pitch forward until his knuckles touched the turf in sprinting posture, escaping the first wild blows. Then he leaped forward, side by side with Scipio, racing with long strides, chest out and hips back, head erect to face and better dodge the clubs than he could do in a blind rush.

The black bounded along like a stag, and Clayborne took place at his shoulder. Surely, he thought, they could endure. Devilish faces appeared in a phantasmagoria, leaning far out in cruel anticipation. The yells, shrill and deep, created a pandemonium. Behind them ran

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a pack of snapping, yapping curs, some of them racing ahead and bounding up at them. Blows descended on shoulders and backs. Two squaws flung and held a line across to trip them and Scipio perceived it just in time to warn Clayborne, as he sprang high and cleared it, to chagrined shrieks of disappointment.

They passed the younger women and then the squaws. A widow stepped out, her haggish face demoniac, flourishing a tomahawk. The black flung her back, confusing the efforts of those beside her. Clayborne felt the cold touch of steel against his flank and knew the blood was flowing. A tall, gaunt woman with gray hair streaming in wisps about her shoulders and shrunken breasts, clutched for him and missed. Another leaped in front of him, wild with fury at the success of the runners. Clayborne threw out his arm stiff-muscled and struck her, bowling her over. Back of them the lane was closing in.

The pace had been terrific and his breath was coming in great gasps. Tomahawks glinted and he caught the flash of a knife from the blanket of a squaw who fairly hurled herself at him. He dealt her a buffet on the jaw, and then Scipio stumbled over a club thrown between his legs, sprawling on all-fours, while a great shout went up and the women pressed in for the kill. One harpy sprang upon Clayborne's back as he stooped above the black, her weapon forgotten as she plied her claw-like hands. Her skinny arm tightened about his neck; the nails of her right hand scraped at his eyes; her yellow teeth bit into his shoulder.

In desperation Clayborne flung a crooked arm upward and back; caught the hag about her neck and fairly hurled her over his shoulder. She had dropped her club and Clayborne recovered it with one hand as he helped Scipio to regain his feet. The black snatched another weapon and they fought together like wounded moose among the wolf-pack, women clinging to their legs and arms, striking at them in a mass so confused that it thwarted effort.

For a moment they won free and then the alley of braves confronted them, orderly in rank, enjoying the struggle, coolly waiting to administer the crushing, fatal blows.

A tomahawk descended and Clayborne caught at the wrist that held it, and wrenched it away. He had forged a foot or two ahead of the black as he wheeled suddenly to tackle his man. He heard Scipio's war-cry and glimpsed the black's club descending, even as he struck more swiftly than the warrior he had picked for himself. The keen ax sank deep into the brave's neck at its junction with the shoulder and the red blood spouted. There was a dull thud. The Masai's club had spattered out the brains of his opponent.

THEY were through the gap and away, scant of breath but impelled to superhuman efforts, helped by the energy that the perilous excitement pumped into their muscles. The line was in confusion—for the moment a scrambling mob. A few tomahawks were flung but none reached their mark.

Clayborne spared wind enough to send out a shrill whistle, his fingers between his lips, as they burned turf beneath their feet up the gentle slope.

There came a shrill whinny in answer—a mad plunging among the line of war-ponies—and then La Belle Rose broke clear and came galloping hard toward her master, drumming the turf as she stretched out into full speed. Over by a wicker corral where the pack and *travois* ponies were held confusion broke out. Scipio's mule, hating the scent of the Indian cayuses, urged by the sight of her travel mate at liberty, was using teeth and hoofs to advantage. The war-ponies, freed from the broken line, were scattering before the boys and men who tried to catch them. A few shots were fired at the mare but none reached her and now the warriors afoot were streaming after the fugitives or hurrying for bows and arrows.

La Belle Rose, her red skin ruby in the sun, her big eyes gleaming, her silken nostrils wide, came streaking up at an angle, snorting and slackening pace as she neared her master. Panting, almost spent, Clayborne, blood pouring from the flesh wound on his buttock, caught at her mane. Scipio set a strong hand under his heel and raised him to the mare's back, vaulting up behind him.

Indignant for a second at the double load, La Belle Rose reared, but Clayborne patted her glossy neck and spoke to her.

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"Go on, *ma belle*, go on!"

The good horse seemed to understand; responded to the demand put upon her and shot forward as if hurled from a catapult. In mid-stride she lowered once her shapely head and then threw it aloft, sending a challenging neigh to echo among the hills like the sound of a trumpet. Beneath the weight of the two men the beautiful flat muscles of her withers slid smooth, and strong in their sheaves, her loins seemed worked by springs of steel, the tendons of her dainty legs replied elastically to the strain while she drank in the air to her mighty lungs through expanding nostrils, blood-red and quivering. Behind, Scipio's mule lumbered along at a good gait. Back of it warriors were mounting their picked steeds.

Faster and faster sped La Belle Rose, her ribs expanding and contracting like great bellows as her belly sank closer to the ground. Handicapped as she was, swift as were the best of the Indian ponies, she left them behind as a wolfhound outdistances mongrels. Clayborne coaxed her on with hand and voice, turning her up-stream when they reached the first bench of the foot-hills. To go down-stream would be to end up in the gorge, he reasoned, while in this direction at least present safety lay.

But he groaned at the call he was forced to put upon the mare. The end was inevitable. They could not keep going long at this terrific pace. Scipio leaned forward and shouted to him against the wind that rushed past them.

"I'm goin' to slide off, Mister Clayborne! No use killin' the mare. No use both of us losin' out when one can git away!"

"No!" Clayborne cried back. "If you drop off, I do!"

The mare began to labor. She maintained her speed but the ease of her swallow-flight was gone. She was like an engine with heated bearings, beginning to pound for lack of oil. Her breath came in great gasps and she shook her head in her effort to supply her lungs. Her beautiful coat was lathered and black with sweat; flecks of stiff foam flew from her jaws, though she was not bitted.

In the valley beneath them Indians were riding hard, as if to cut them off when the unseen contour of the valley changed. La Belle Rose gave a great sigh under them. It sounded as if even her gallant heart despaired. Insensibly she slackened. Yells from the rear sounded where the braves began to close the gap. Presently the mule gained on them, was galloping beside them. The mare staggered, caught herself and went lunging on.

"I'm goin'!" said Scipio. "Good-by!"

"Wait!" cried Clayborne. His ears had caught something that sounded like shots, dulled by distance. And, ahead, where the oval valley began to close its ellipse, he saw a cloud of dust. It came rapidly on. Could it be Fremont?

The Indians below them were shouting to each other in excitement. The cloud mounted higher, and a heavy drumming came from back of it. As it passed a notch in the hills a funneled breeze swept the dust aside and Clayborne, with a sinking heart, saw a dense mass of animals dashing wildly toward them, presenting a solid front of lowered heads backed by the unmistakable humps of buffaloes. It was a stampeding herd and they were directly in its path, on a tired-out horse. The yells of the braves back of them grew plainer.

The buffalo lurched on in their headlong gallop, bellowing, wild eyes twinkling out of shaggy masses of hair, the clattering of their horns distinct. Barely thirty yards away their ranks opened and a rider on a horse that shone golden in the sun headed the mob. He fired and a little curl of white smoke hung in the air as a buffalo dropped to its knees and rolled over. The man sprang from his saddle as La Belle Rose wearily pounded into the widening gap where the bison shouldered away from the fallen cow. The rider looked up in astonishment. He was a spare, deep-chested man of medium height with a pair of keen blue eyes, calm and even quizzical at the encounter, though they widened at the sight of the naked black man sliding from the wearied mare and the white leaning wearily forward, bloody from hip to toes. With movements almost too swift to follow, the stranger loaded his gun and remounted. He had taken in the situation at a glance.

"Got away?" he said. "Whole camp after you? What are they? Arapahos?"

Clayborne nodded his head. Weakened with loss of blood, not able to answer

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from lack of knowledge, words seemed a useless effort.

"All right," said the stranger. "I'll handle this. Hey, catch him!"

Scipio jumped to the aid of Clayborne, reeling from his seat, hills and sky blending in a whirl with the tossing herd of buffalo, now dividing like a stream split by an island. The blue-eyed man spurred his golden-yellow pony toward the Indians, who had checked before the charging beasts.

Through a deep rank of bulls bringing up the rear of the drove, other riders appeared. One was mounted on a black, one on a dapple gray. They were Lajeunesse and Fremont.

"What's this?" demanded Fremont.

"We got away from the Injians," said Scipio.

"I know that," said Fremont impatiently. "Where's Carson? What tribes are they?"

"Arapahos and some Cheyennes," said Lajeunesse, gazing to where the warriors in the valley bottom had halted and were staring up, irresolute for the moment. The herd had passed thundering on.

"Get in touch with the train, Basil!" cried Fremont. "You men stay where you are!"

He set the chafing gray to the gallop and rode off at top speed after the blue-eyed man.

CLAYBORNE, coming out of his dizziness, leaned against the heaving mare, which stood spent, with trembling legs. She bent her neck and snuffed at her master, blowing out her breath again and gently nuzzling at him with her lips. It was her way of telling him that she had been glad to serve and was not yet done. Scipio passed a hand over her dripping legs.

"Not a tendon bowed or strained," he said. "They ain't no cayuse of the plains can beat you, lady-hawss."

Clayborne, recovering, stroked her velvet muzzle and whispered in her ear and the mare snuggled to him.

"Reckon we're goin' to get out of this afteh all," said Scipio. "Cap'n Fremont and Kit Cahson's on the job an' Mistch Lajeunesse has gone kitin' afteh the troop. Heah comes mah ol' mule. Betteh you mount the mule, Misteh Clayborne, an' I'll lead the mare. Misteh Lajeunesse is stahtin' back."

The Frenchman had ridden to a spur of the table-land and signaled back to the train, using a round pocket-mirror, carried for the purpose, as heliograph. A troop, mere dots in the distance but rapidly enlarging, was in swift motion as the two went slowly forward to meet Lajeunesse.

"You'd best have that wound dressed," he said to Clayborne. "Indian tomahawks may not be actually poisoned, but there is often trouble if the wounds are not cleaned right away. Otherwise it doesn't amount to much. Just what happened? We found the graves and guessed that you had dug them. It set you up in Fremont's opinion mightily. We started to trail you up the gulch this morning and then Carson found buffalo sign and we went after the herd, not knowing you had been attacked."

Clayborne told his story briefly while the troop neared them. Lajeunesse nodded and rode off for a few moments to confer with the voyagers, who barely halted and went sweeping by, a capable hard-bitten company, their rifles carried across the pommels of their saddles, long hair streaming, half a dozen Delaware Indians with them.

"There won't be any trouble," said Lajeunesse easily. "Carson is bound to know some of the chiefs. More than likely Fremont will have met one or more and they all know Fremont and Carson, and that they are not traveling alone. Besides, the buffalo are a god-send. This is a strayed herd that has wandered into the mountains. You seldom see them so far west. The Indians are thinking far more about ribs and humps right now than they are bothering about you. It'll put them in a good humor and, when it comes to talking, the captain will have all the best of the argument. You killed their braves, but they started things by going on the war-path and massacring that wagon train. We'll get your pack horse back for you and most of your belongings. For which, my friend, you may thank the buffalo."

It turned out, after much palaver, as Lajeunesse had predicted. The troop rode back with the pack mule and Clayborne's clothes, even some of the provisions.

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But the ammunition carried on the cayuse had vanished. The Indians claimed to know nothing of it. Clayborne noted that the voyagers treated him with a new respect. It appeared that the story of the fight at the cave had been discussed in full at the council, before the peace-pipe had passed, and he gathered that he and Scipio might fairly be considered to have won their spurs.

A herbal salve had been applied to his slash and soothed it mightily. He put on his own buckskins, stiffened as they were here and there with blood, when Fremont sent for him at the night encampment.

"You are determined to reach California?" asked Fremont, abruptly enough, but with a light in his eyes not unfriendly.

Clayborne answered in the affirmative. Fremont frowned a little, from habit.

"It is doubtful if any more caravans take the southern route this year, after the murder in the great cañon," he said. "It is late, as it is. You have lost most of your ammunition. Your outfit is quite inadequate. It will be better if you join my force—on the same terms as the rest." He held out his hand. "I can always use good fighting men and a good horse," he said with a smile.

"Basil Lajeunesse has requested that you mess with him. Carson, Dick Owens, the friend he has brought with him from Taos; with Godey, Maxwell and Kern, make up the number. All are agreeable. I do not think, Clayborne," he added, "that you will be long in qualifying as a first class voyager under Carson, Owens and Godey. Those three men, under Napoleon, chosen as he chose men, would have been marshals.

"Carson is the bravest man I know, the most truthful, perhaps the best rider and shot. And he is quick to see the chances of both sides and act on them. Godey does not know what danger is, the coolest man I know, and of stubborn resolution. Carson vouches for Owens as a better man than himself. That is enough for me. I am glad to have you with us," Fremont concluded gracefully. "You and your man —and your mare."

"He is not my man," amended Clayborne. "He is free."

"So much the better for him. He will not be unappreciated. You will ride in one of the wagons until that slash of yours closes."

The last was an order, not a suggestion, and Clayborne perceived that, the friendly induction over, he now took place without further favor with the remainder of the Pathfinder's company.

He was well content to have it so.

CHAPTER XI

BEYOND THE RANGES

CLAYBORNE stayed in the wagon while his wound healed, content to see La Belle Rose following behind like a dog, without a rope or halter, neighing to him once in a while as, relieved from duty, she gradually recovered from the effects of her grueling race.

He noticed the precision and regularity of conduct of the expedition with interest. The camp was always awake and up before dawn. After the meal, Carson with Owens, Godey and sometimes Maxwell, met in short council with Fremont, discussing the trail for the day. Then the scouts winged out right and left ahead of the main body. Sometimes one of them would reappear, riding back and forth on his horse, or a shot would be fired to announce that something of interest had been noted. Then Fremont, on Sacramento, would dash out with Lajeunesse and another voyager named Archambeau, the Delawares about them like a black cloud.

The Delawares constituted Fremont's personal body-guard, never far from him by day, circled about his tent or blanket by night. To them the trip was a war-trail and they were ever on the alert for sign of hostile tribes.

"It's a funny thing about Indians," Carson told Clayborne across the campfire one night. "I've figured out that the reason they talk so little and look so confounded solemn all the time is not because they're over wise, but because they're not overburdened with ideas. The farther west we go the wilder they'll get—naked as worms, men hunting the sage for sage-squirrels or fishing in the lakes and streams, women gathering seeds and acorns and fuel for the fires. General idea of the bucks to kill for grub everything that's got fur, feathers or fins on it and for the

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pleasure every brave belonging to another tribe. Just plain animals!"

Clayborne had been assigned to a mess with Carson, Owens, Godey, Kern, the artist for the expedition, and Lajeunesse. The camp was split into messes of six and seven and he thought himself fortunate. Fremont generally ate with his own mess except when they were in Indian territory. Then he kept himself in his tent.

"Makes a hit with the Indians who come in," said Carson. "They call him the 'Big White Chief' and, the more mysterious he is and hard to get at, the bigger they think him. Mystery and dignity is what they look for in their own chiefs, and Fremont follows suit."

It was a liberal education to belong to that group. It brought Clayborne into closer contact with Fremont, for one thing, and led to a certain intimacy that grew out of Clayborne's familiarity with, and capacity to discuss, national politics and economics. As he studied Fremont he became sure that, back of the man's ardor and devotion to the scientific work of the expedition, lay something deeper, bigger.

Clayborne would often see him after the camp lay wrapped in their blankets, observing the transit of a star or a moon culmination. Then sitting by the smoldering fire, he would gaze into the embers as if he sought, as did the ancients, to discover by divination of the ashes what the future held. He was self-contained, purposeful—a man of action and of quick decision, yet a dreamer if not a visionary.

Dignified at all times, he would set Sacramento to a leap over the green mass of a fallen tree instead of jumping the bough. And, in this display of effervescent spirit, the whole party shared. Clayborne loved to see Carson fling himself upon an unsaddled horse and, riding like a centaur, dash off after antelope, never returning without his kill. Carson was blue of eye, Owens, his friend, dark-hazel with phenomenal range of vision. Godey's orbs were black as those of the Delawares. The Creole was the most vivacious, a bit of a dandy at all times. Carson and Owens shaved religiously, but Godey's dressing of his curly locks was always the point of quiet fun-making. In coolness, in ability to size up a risky situation swiftly, in courage, in knowledge of every branch of their craft, they were inimitable. Clayborne marveled at the prodigious amount of knowledge they had acquired and at the ease with which they performed their work. Each was a combination of riverman, ranger, woodsman and mountaineer, of hunter, warrior and scout. They seemed to have been evolved for the purpose in hand—the crossing of a wilderness, the discovery of frontiers.

Fremont said to Clayborne one night:

"I do not know what I should do without them. There is no end to their endurance or their good humor and I have never seen them 'rattled,' as Carson styles it. They are a constant example to the rest; they furnish our *esprit de corps*. Basil Lajeunesse is a good man, one of my best—so is Archambeau—but they haven't got the qualities of that trio. To me they are types of America at its best."

On the march Clayborne beguiled Fremont into talking about California, and the Pathfinder waxed enthusiastic during one noonday rest:

"It is a wonderful land," he said. "We need it to round out our boundaries; it belongs to us by geographical right. Congress has no idea of its possibilities. The President is apathetic, save that he does not wish England to get hold of the harbor of San Francisco. But they do not know, they will not listen about, the great valleys, the rivers, the lakes, the mighty forests and the minerals in the hills. They have a fixed idea, despite all reports, that the mountains fall sheer to the sea in tremendous barren cliffs."

"What chance is there of England getting it?" asked Clayborne. "If this expedition of ours is purely scientific and there are no present military or naval forces in California, how can we strike in time to offset England when the moment comes? What ships we have in the Pacific are far outnumbered and outmetaled by theirs. And what protection have our settlers got against massacre by the Mexicans in case of war?"

Fremont looked at him shrewdly. Then he drew in the dust, by the light of the fire, the angling outline of the Pacific Coast and marked it with three crosses at top, bottom and middle.

"Columbia River to the north, Mazatlan to the south and Monterey the center of the situation," he said. "War news with

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Mexico will break at Mazatlan. We can eliminate the ships in the Columbia. The first nation to erect their flag at Monterey will hold California. Mexico will endeavor to cede it to Britian without a doubt. But, if we get there first, if Britain finds the Stars and Stripes in the breeze when they arrive off Monterey Bay, they'll concede possession to us beyond a doubt. It is a race, friendly in its way, but with a prize hung up well worth trying for. And I fancy Commodore Sloat will manage to outwit the British.

"As for the settlers, pioneers have to take their chances when they pass their own frontiers. Perhaps they will find a leader and manage to hold off the Mexicans and their Indian allies until the government gets into action."

Clayborne guessed who the possible leader might be. He felt certain that, once on the ground and the emergency in sight, Fremont would take hold of the situation. But he could get nothing more definite. The talk shifted.

He found that Fremont regarded the wide belt of the prairies and the ranges merely as a bridge between the land of "the Big Blue"—the Mississippi Valley—and the Far West. Later the gap would be filled in, but the Pathfinder saw only the farthest objective. Only the Pacific halted his dreams of empire, and Clayborne whimsically imagined that, had he been a sailor instead of a soldier, China would have been their bourne. He was the breaker of trails, the discoverer of frontiers. Let others follow in his path and stop where they chose by the wayside. He would press on.

Clayborne's imagination saw farms and cities, factories and mines, peopled and worked by the coming generations, all along their route. He would point out a likely site or some magnificent stretch of grazing land and Fremont would nod, but always he would qualify his acquiescence with the invariable answer—

"Wait until you see California!"

"We'll have a railroad across the continent before long," he said. "I have the general route in mind—much of it surveyed.

"This trip may not see the work finished, but we'll lay out the path for the iron trail, Clayborne, and it will be built within our time."

ONCE only did they sight buffaloes again. Owens brought in the news and they galloped forward. To Clayborne the herd looked like masses of trees until it began to scent the pursuit and went lumbering off. Fremont, on Sacramento, led, La Belle Rose close behind. Once among the bison, the hunters divided. The thunder of the hoofs and the clatter of horns drowned the noise of shots, but Clayborne saw curls of smoke to right and left where Owens and Carson had made their kill. Just ahead of him Fremont raced alongside a fat cow, a pistol upraised in each hand, waiting to get close enough to a buffalo to fire back of its hump with the pistol muzzle actually grazing the shaggy hide.

It was wild, magnificent sport, riding among that mêlée of horns and hoofs and heads, the horses snorting, excited as their masters, hating the rank smell of the buffalo, but swept away by the chase. The buffalo thundered on, gazing wickedly from side to side, threatening to swerve and charge. Here was no long-distance killing but steed matched against wild animal, the shot saved until the race was won.

Clayborne heard a slight report and saw a feather of smoke from Fremont's pistol, still carried muzzle up, while a look of utter astonishment showed on his face. But La Belle Rose was up with the cow Clayborne had marked for himself, running stride for stride. He leaned forward, pressed his muzzle back of the shoulder and fired. The beast dropped to its knees and rolled over. Fremont came up, a Delaware in trail, and they watched while the Indian skinned the beast and cut it up for camp, taking ribs and tongue and hump, with the smoking liver for his own *bonne bouche*, munching at it in bloody nonchalance while he worked.

Fremont touched his hair, taking off his sombrero.

"I learned a lesson this morning," he said. "Not to go buffalo hunting with hair-triggered pistols in my holsters. I don't know how it went off but one of them discharged and clipped my hair for me. That might have happened on a lone trail where I'd have lain until the tall grass covered me."

Maxwell suggested a halt in order to jerk the superfluous buffalo meat in strips

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and dry it on strings in the sun, but Fremont shook his head. They had no time to lose, he declared. So they passed on swiftly through wooded ranges with deer, elk and smaller game in plenty, crossing several affluents of the Grand River that flowed into the Gulf of California.

WHEN at last they reached the Great Salt Lake even Clayborne could not conjure up a vision of a future city to arise on its desolate shores. The Bear River flowed into it through a pleasant valley but the lake was desolate —a dead sea. The rocky margins were whitened with salty spray and sodium incrustations. The struggling plants and bushes looked like bleached coral. The vast expanse of silent, heavy water stretched to the north with several large islands raising high and somber heads in a loneliness that held sublimity. There were no trees in sight. A few gulls and a flock of pelicans supplied the only visible life. A storm swept down in sudden fury from the mountains and hid the islands, clearing away as swiftly as it came.

To the west, according to the Indians and the records of the previous expedition, lay an arid desert white with alkali. They did not explore the waters. They had brought no boat for Fremont had sailed over it the year before, but they did cross the shallows to an island close to the shore.

They made their way over the salt floor of the shallows, the horses' feet sinking to the fetlocks in the sludgy stuff, the water touching the girths. There was rank grass on the island and half a dozen bands of antelope that soon furnished venison.

An old Utah Indian awaited their return to camp, his wrinkled face framed in gray hair. He harangued Fremont with excited dignity.

"A cool old cuss," said Carson. "Utah Indian— says all the antelope on the island are his and represent all he has to live on. He wants payment."

With nods and gutturals of pleasure the ancient buck declared his satisfaction at the payment for the trespass on his private preserve, getting some red cloth, a knife and some tobacco.

It was the middle of October but Summer still lingered at Salt Lake. Three days of rain followed and then a morning dawned clear to show the peaks of the Bear River range covered with snow. Fremont called a consultation concerning the route, giving his preference for an apparent cut-off over a flat dry-looking plain covered with stunted sage.

Neither Walker nor Carson had ever traversed it, and the local Indians, brought in by the generosity of the lord of Antelope Island, discouraged any attempt. On the line of travel, fifty or sixty miles distant, at the farther edge of the desert, showed a solitary-peaked mountain. Fremont pointed it out to Carson.

"It looks fertile," he said.

Carson nodded. Owens bent his far-sighted eyes upon the peak and agreed. Clayborne marveled. To him the mount seemed to promise nothing. But Carson with Maxwell and another man set out across the desert with a pack-mule, water and provisions and the next day the rest of the party followed.

He took along a local Piute, bribed heavily, in the hope of his knowing some waterholes left by the rains. At noon the Indian weakened and declared his belief that they would all perish. He was dismissed with his reward, and the caravan went on through the scanty sage over a floor as level as if water had long stood on it, sending up clouds of irritating dust at every step of man or beast. Hour after hour they marched and camped at night in the utter solitude, lighting fires to signal Carson. The glittering stars came out above them and emphasized the dreariness, the threat of the place. To Clayborne it seemed as if the desert had swallowed them up.

Before daybreak they heard the cheery jingling of spurs, and Carson came gaily in to the sleeping train with good news of green grass and a stream. The way was found, and the weary trail of future emigrants shortened.

A week in November the party divided, Fremont sending the main body under Walker to follow a river to the end of its wide valley, to skirt the eastern slope of the Sierra, or the "California Mountain," and reunite at a large fresh-water lake. Clayborne was pleased to find himself retained with the smaller party—ten men in all including three Delawares. Clayborne was too much of a tyro to be of scouting use, but he made one discovery on his own account that showed his advance as a voyager.

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La Belle Rose, acquiring her own education, treading softly with springy fetlocks over a mountain trail ahead of the rest, stopped abruptly with an inquiring toss of her head. There was a light smoke rising from a ravine and Clayborne, riding over, discovered a solitary Indian standing before a sage-brush fire over which was hanging an earthenware pot filled with sage-brush squirrels. Another bunch of the small game lay near by with his bow and arrows.

The man was in a brown study and, the sides of the ravine shutting off all sound, the rest came up at Clayborne's silent beckoning and surrounded him. He gave a convulsive start and then, summoning his fortitude, ignoring the gloating looks of the Delawares, gave a deprecating smile and offered his stew and his squirrels as a peace gift.

He was well made, not bad-looking and, to use Carson's expression, "naked as a worm." Fremont accepted half a dozen squirrels, shook hands with him and gave him some tobacco. The Delawares lingered but Fremont called them in. The chief, Sagundai; showed Clayborne the bow and arrows he had appropriated. The heads of obsidian were beautifully shaped and the bow strengthened with sinews. Fremont turned sharply on Sagundai.

"The man will starve without them. Take them back!" he ordered. Sagundai obeyed stoically.

"A scalp's a scalp to them," said Carson. "But the chief won't stand for it. We'll be meeting other Indians now."

Carson was the first to see the next one. Four days later the camp was beside a spring, close to the top of the mountain, near the increasing snow line. Carson had killed an antelope and, after supper, with the rest, was lying with feet to the fire, hands back of his head, smoking. Suddenly he half rose and pointed across the fire with an exclamation.

"Good ——, look there!"

Clayborne saw an old and skinny hag, almost naked, with grizzled hair, peering into the blaze over her crooked hands. She seemed to be a century old at least. She had started to talk in her own tongue thinking she had come across a camp of her own people, when she saw the white faces and turned to escape. The Delawares held her and she told her tale.

She had been abandoned by her people and left to die because she was very old, could gather no more seeds and was no longer good for anything.

"Give her a quarter of the antelope!" ordered Fremont. "Let her roast it by the fire."

But no sooner had the crone clutched the meat than she darted off. Carson ran after her with a brand of fire calling her back, but she had disappered. Her tracks showed at the spring next morning, and food was left for her to help her through the Winter.

Three days later, heading up toward the rendezvous at Walker's Lake, fourteen Indians came abruptly into view, in Indian file, heads bent and eyes fixed on the ground. Silent and unfriendly, they passed by without sign that they noticed the white men who were invading their hunting grounds.

THAT night the party camped among the brushes that bordered the lake, and on the third day the main party arrived in a snow storm. After the storm Fremont called a council.

"It's December," he said. "Any day may see the passes blocked. We are not far from the pass I made last year. To cross it with the whole party is a hazard, in case of heavy snow. I propose to take fifteen men and try to get through to Sutter's Fort on the Sacramento before snow flies. The rest of you can trail south along the line of the lake and round the point of the California Mountain into the head of the San Joaquin. The grass will be green in the valley when you reach there. We will meet somewhere on one of the rivers flowing from Tulare Lake. I will take that up with Walker, who will guide you. Mr. Kern will go along, also Maxwell. Carson and Owens shall come with me together with Lajeunesse, Archambeau—" He named off ten whites in all and Sagundai with four other Delwares.

Clayborne was glad to rejoin Scipio who he found had become equal with their chiefs in the eyes of the Delawares. But he was astounded when Fremont ended his talk by naming him as the head of the main body.

"You'll be guided by Walker, of course," said the Pathfinder, "and will consult with Kern. Let Maxwell look after your

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commissariat. The secret of leadership, Clayborne, is in the selection of the officers and the use of them. You are born for leadership and here is an opportunity to work into it."

Fremont's fifteen left, marching up a river swarming with trout that flowed into Pyramid Lake, and Clayborne took his charge with pride. The eastern side of the Sierra, like that of the Rockies, was barren compared with the western slope.

The California Valley was, Walker said, a land flowing with milk and honey, an enormous game preserve frequented by the horse-thief Indians—roving bands which had been servants at the now dismantled Missions and whose elementary education in Christianity seemed only to have aggravated their natural savagery. Toward the coast were Spanish ranchos where great herds of cattle wandered.

Christmas Day found Clayborne and his train well up toward the summit of the Sierra. Two days later Walker announced that they were at the head of the river he and Fremont had agreed upon as a meeting place and Clayborne ordered camp established. They chose a cove thickly wooded with evergreen oaks, pines, firs, and enormous redwood with thick cinnamon-colored bark, over two hundred feet in height, their girths spanning forty feet. The weather was almost that of Summer until the middle of January when rain fell day after day. There was no sign of Fremont, and Clayborne went into council with Kern and Walker.

"Maybe we've got mixed about the streams," said Walker. "These mountain torrents are all forked. My advice is to make a start and trail down the Cosumne River well into the valley. Go into camp there and let me start north to look for the Chief."

It seemed a good suggestion and they agreed upon it, easily making their way down the wide pass of the river-head. They left the high peaks—snow-covered, glacier-cloaked—the towering trees and followed the giant's staircase of the foaming river down into the valley, moving easily along the base of the Sierra at a liesurely gait, the animals fattening on the rich pasturage, the men animated with their actual entry into California.

Clayborne was astounded with his views from the slopes of the great valley stretching north and west. Here was no stern pitch of rugged mountains straight down to a barren coast-line, but a land of plenty that could sustain millions of people and feed as many more. Woods and plains and waters swarmed with food; the level sweeps were adorned with myriads of blossoms—poppies sowing roods of land with deep gold, lupines blue as the sky, mariposas like hovering butterflies—a veritable Eden.

Clayborne held no fear for Fremont but secretly chafed that his command had not effected a junction. It was clearly up to Walker, but Clayborne was to his own mind responsible, and it was with a good deal of satisfaction that one dawn he saw the guide set out.

At breakfeast a grizzly bear, ranging the river bottom for acorns, sniffed humans and charged the camp. It was ludicrous despite the real danger, to see the men scatter and climb into the trees. Kern, Maxwell the mighty Nimrod, the Delawares and their chief, Scipio and Clayborne took refuge in the same oak while the grizzly nosed the meal and devoured it, upsetting the coffee and burning his nozzle, then plunging maliciously through the encampment, scattering blankets and saddles.

"He'll stampede the horses," said Clayborne. "Can you see a rifle anywhere, Scipio?"

"I was in such a hurry, I shuah forgot mine," grinned the black. "Jus' look at them claws, Misteh Clayborne. I wondeh how can that b'ar climb?"

Walker and Maxwell were in the next tree, chagrined. They had fastened their belts together and formed a loop in the end of the improvised lasso. Maxwell lay along the bough, fishing for a rifle. He got the loop over the barrel, inched it along, tightened and triumphantly lifted the weapon. The charge was secured, as usual, by a wooden ramrod, tight-fitting, that acted as plug and kept the ball in place.

"Now then, consarn yore 'grizzly hide," said Maxwell, "here's where you furnish ba'rs grease for Godey's perrook. We're gittin' close to the settlements now and he'll be wantin' to perk up."

A laugh greeted the sally and died abruptly. The bear came galloping from behind a tree, grunting like a great pig.

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Maxwell hauled in his slack just as the grizzly arrived, reared, made a mighty swipe at the weapon that shattered it and, one iron claw catching in the belt, yanked Maxwell from his precarious perch to sprawl upon the ground.

Instantly a score of men dropped from the trees and raced for weapons. Maxwell lay still, as if stunned, while the bear snuffed at him, tucked a paw under him and turned him over as a boy might examine a beetle. Then the beast reared upright as he recognized the offensive, the pig eyes twinkling savagely, the red mouth curiously triangular, wide open, showing the ivory tusks from which dripped the saliva of his rage. The hunters dodged about the brute in a circle shifting to keep him uncertain where to charge and hold his attention from Maxwell. Bullets and arrows sped together. Transfixed by half a dozen shafts, buried to the feathers in the shaggy hide from the short range, bored by a dozen bullets, sightless in one eye where Clayborne had targeted, the bear rolled over, biting at its wounds and clawing viciously at the arrows. Another volley sent it into a flurry and finished the fight.

They advanced slowly and mournfully upon Maxwell who lay with arms outstretched, face in the dust. Walker examined him.

"There isn't a scratch on him," he said perplexedly. He started to lift an eyelid whereupon Maxwell kicked him in the ribs. In a moment the two were rolling over the ground in a wrestling match, Maxwell, shouting with laughter, pinned shoulders-down at last by Walker.

He had "played possum" for the bear's deception.

There was plenty of fat for Godey's peruke—enough for a regiment. It was four inches thick on back and belly, and Maxwell estimated the bear's weight at a thousand pounds.

WALKER had been gone a week when Kern, who had been out sketching, came racing into camp, swinging his sombrero, hard-pressed by three men, one of whom, on a bright sorrel horse, dashed ahead at the last minute, jumped from his horse before the sliding hoofs had halted and grasped Clayborne by the hand. It was Carson; the other two were Owens and Walker.

"The Chief sent us out scouting for you. He and Walker got mixed up on two streams that have the same name. Reckon we'll have to name them all over again. We're in camp in the San José Valley, foot of Wildcat Ridge. Going to rest up and outfit for a while."

"Any news?" asked Clayborne. He spoke of Mexico, and Carson understood him. They had talked over the conquest of California together and Clayborne recognized in Carson a spirit kindred to his own.

"Not much. The Californians seem friendly enough. They come in and show us how to ride and we show them how to shoot. I brought down a vulture with a broken wing the other day and Fremont had it tied to a wagon, to make a pet of it. Owens, with a mouth like a fish faced up-stream, was watching a Californian on a bucking pony. The pony won and Owens backs up to the wagon, forgetting the bird. But the bird hadn't forgotten what had happened to him, and he got his revenge on Owens. Show 'em the patch on the seat of your pants, Dick! That vulture tasted blood all right. You should have heard Dick let out a whoop! He's been riding lop-sided ever since.

"We got over the pass all right," went on Carson while the whole camp listened. "Beat out the snow, got down to Crimea rancho on the American Fork, then to Sutter's Fort. Sutter says the Mexicans were stirred up about our last year's trip but had calmed down a bit. We started down the Big Valley to find you folks, had a scrimmage or two with the Cosumnes. They tried to do up Dick and me and two of the Delawares on the Mariposa River, but we camped on a hilltop and held them off till the Chief arrived. Some of those Indians are not going to eat horse any more. Owens had a duel with one on horseback in the open. Pistol against arrows. Pistol won.

"We didn't find you but we weren't worrying about you. So we went back to Sutter's Fort. Dick, show them what you found in the American Fork."

"You mean the gold?" asked Owens.

"If it is gold. Chief said it was iron sulfites. Anyhow, Dick got a bunch of pellets, soft and heavy, out of a sand-bar. He'll show 'em to you. What's the matter, Dick?"

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"I had 'em in a patch pocket on my hip," said Owens. "When that —— bird you shot pecked at me he tore the whole thing loose."

A roar of laughter greeted his confession.

"If it is gold," said Carson, "that river's full of it. I'm going back there some day and dig me a wagon-load."

"What happened after you got to Sutter's Fort?" asked Clayborne.

"The Chief got a passport for us from Captain Sutter, who is a magistrate, and he loaned us his launch to go down the Sacramento and San Francisco Bay to Yerba Buena. We've got a vice-consul there named Leidesdorff. Met a Captain Hinckley who took us over to see a quicksilver mine at Almaden and we all got lost in the fog, and the *tules,* as they call the rushes.

"Then we started for Monterey with the vice-consul. Ran into more fog in the sand-hills back of the Mission Dolores and wound up at Sanchez rancho for the night. Next night in the San José Valley at the Sunol rancho, then over the Salinas plains to Monterey. Saw Consul Larkin. Governor Pico wasn't there. The Chief makes formal calls on General Don José Castro, in command, on Manuel Castro the Prefecto, Alvarado the Alcalde and the ex-governor, whose name I forget. He told them we were all plain citizens making a survey in the interests of science and commerce, and we've got a permission to go on with the good work in Lower California and up the Colorado River from the Gulf. Everything quiet and peaceful as a gorged snake."

"It looks like it," Clayborne admitted, with a regretful note at which Carson smiled.

"Storms start sudden in these parallels," said the scout. "These Mexicans have a great proverb they are always quoting. '*Quien sabe?*'"

THE reunited party went into camp on the east side of Wildcat Ridge while Fremont examined the trees and shrubbery. Then they crossed the crest into dense forests of more redwood, and at last they reached the coast near the northern horn of the great crescent of Monterey Bay.

Though warned by the fogs that filtered through the trees, Clayborne had dreamed so often of the blue splendor of the Pacific that his first view was disappointing. Gray-green rollers came out of the mist and sullenly broke upon the rocks beneath a drizzle of rain that changed to a constant downpour for a week, with a storm from the southeast. The last day of Febuary saw the sun smiling once more, and they passed along the foot-hills of the Salinas plains where the wild oats were three feet high and already headed, with grass and brilliant flowers everywhere.

They were bound for the San Joaquin preparatory to continuing south. Monterey was west of them, some twenty-five miles distant beyond the coast hills.

One early afternoon they reached a small creek-bed well out on the Salinas plain. A big herd of cattle was grazing on the plain, attended by *vaqueros.*

"According to Larkin," said Fremont, "there are a number of American and English ranchers hereabouts. Suppose you ride over and see, Clayborne. Find out just where the fork of the Salinas heads in from the pass to the San Joaquin Valley. If the owner is an American, you might arrange for a young beef and also let him know all he wants to about us and our route."

Clayborne rode off willingly. They had traveled easily and La Belle Rose was in fine fettle. The mare, prancing and tossing her head, cantered over the grass and flowers toward the ranch buildings. Level as the surface of the plain appeared from the hills, Clayborne found it rolling, divided into low slopes with *arroyos,* or draws, between.

As he rode along the crest of one of these *barrancas* a horse and rider, dashing up from the valley beyond the next grassy billow, appeared suddenly against the skyline. Through the long grass ahead of the equestrian loped a wild dog, called locally a coyote, one of those timorous, treacherous brutes ever after the young calves.

The coyote started up the slope toward Clayborne, sighted or winded him and swerved, continuing straight down the draw at good speed. Clayborne touched the mare with his heels and waved to the horseman on the parallel *barranca.* Between them they herded the coyote, running with red tongue out and head

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turned sidewise to watch the pursuit. The bottom of the draw was covered with short turf through which the suggestion of a stream trickled. Presently Clayborne and the other rider were plunging through wild oats that came higher than the horses' girths and impeded their speed. Then the oats disappeared as the draw grew shallower and wider.

Clayborne called on the mare again but, the faster he went, the faster went the coyote, loping along without apparent effort. Clayborne shifted his weight a little forward to the mare's withers.

"La Belle, *ma belle*," he said. "You're not going to be beaten by a California pinto, are you? Go, lady, go!"

He struck her neck lightly, as a pistol shot came from the other side of the draw. The coyote, missed by the bullet, lengthened his tireless gait. La Belle Rose leaped high and came down in full gallop. Clayborne had not noticed the other rider especially, but his mettle was up, his challenge was taken and the two mounts, Southern and Western bred, fought it out, flying over the springy soil in keen rivalry. La Belle Rose had the advantage in size but Clayborne had casually noticed that the figure on the pinto—a piebald in magnificent condition—was slight and boyish, so that the odds were fairly even. Besides, his mare, while fresh, had traveled for four hours that morning even though the pace had been slow.

The prize, the evidence of victory, was the coyote. The plains wolf let out another link as it began to lose ground. Clayborne risked a shot and missed. He called to the mare once more and she laid down to her work, covering the ground in mighty jumps, the muscles tensing and relaxing under him. The pinto began to fall behind. Out of the corner of his eye Clayborne saw a quirt rise and fall and chuckled. With a terrific burst of speed La Belle Rose brought him almost opposite the flying quarry and he fired again. The coyote turned a somersault; its body, bent like a bow, arched upward and collapsed. Clayborne reined in the mare, turned her and rode down toward the dead beast.

Then he abruptly pulled up and swept his sombrero from his head.

The rider of the pinto, coming down the other slope to meet him, was a girl. She was riding as no other woman that Clayborne had seen, save Indians, but she lost none of her femininity in her breeches and the striding of the high-peaked saddle. Nor was she Spanish or Mexican. Her hat had blown off in the chase and golden hair was tumbled about her shoulders. Her fair skin had been gently treated by the weather and was but lightly tanned so that the crimson of her cheeks showed plainly. Her eyes were deep blue and her laughing mouth disclosed white, perfect teeth, backed by a lining as pink as a kitten's.

"Your horse is faster than mine, *señor*," she said in Spanish.

Clayborne knew enough of the language to reply but chose his own tongue.

"His legs are longer," he answered.

Her blue eyes widened.

"You are an American?" she asked. Her surprize was warranted, Clayborne realized. His skin was as dark as an Indian's; with his untrimmed black hair and dark eyes, he might well pass for a Mexican.

"Surely," he said. "With Fremont's party. We are camped on the creek. I was riding to see if an American owned the rancho. We need a young beef, for one thing."

"My uncle, Mr. Hartnell, will be glad to let you have it," she said. "My name is Marydel Lee."

Clayborne repeated it aloud. It was very musical, he thought. And how different was this girl, a daughter of the sun and wind, from Lucille Brandon, who would have considered her vulgar, unwomanly. Clayborne had dismissed women from his thoughts but this girl gave him a shock that was distinctly pleasurable. She seemed the very spirit of American womanhood in a new, free country, and she was distinctly beautiful. More than that, vibrant with life. He gave his own name.

"We heard you had been to Monterey," she said. "Did you know that the natives object to your arrival?"

"We have permission," started Clayborne.

The girl laughed scornfully.

"The word of a Mexican, high or low is worth—that!" she said and snapped her fingers. "They resent all of us Americans. They would like to drive us out

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of the country. My uncle will tell you more about their attitude. He will want to see Captain Fremont. Will you ride with me to the rancho and see about your beef and meet Mr Hartnell? And thank you for shooting that calf-killer."

"My mare deserves the praise," said Clayborne.

"And your good shooting. But isn't she a beauty? Not born here, nor bred, though we have some wonderful horses."

A HALLOO sounded down the draw. Turning, Clayborne saw Carson waving him back with his hat.

"I must go," he said. "They want me at the camp. But I shall see you again?"

"I hope so," answered the girl and Clayborne's wish snatched at the implied compliment to himself, merely polite though the phrase might have been.

All the way back to Carson, who waited him, the mare's hoofs drummed out "Marydel Lee! Marydel Lee!" Lee was most certainly a Southern name but he had little time to consider that question before Carson hailed him.

"Max has just ridden in," said Carson, meaning Maxwell. "He passed a Mexican officer all blue and red and yellow like a parrot, on his way to our camp with two men. From what Max says of his general attitude he is hardly an *amigo* bringing gifts. Max wanted to pistol him for something he said. Who was the boy you were talking to?"

"That was Miss Lee, niece of Hartnell, an American who owns the ranch," said Clayborne, conscious of flushing somewhat under his tan at Carson's keen and sudden look. "She told me the general feeling round here is that California is not a healthy climate for Americans."

"It is going to be almighty unhealthy for *Mexicanos* if they start anything," said Carson grimly. "The Chief won't stand for any insults and there's no question as to how the rest of us feel in the matter. I hate a greaser and a greaser hates a gringo, as they call us, and where there's no love lost there's little time wasted in preliminaries. We're just in time."

The Mexican officer, making himself known as Lieutenant Chavez, in a swaggering manner that subsided a little as he felt himself the focus of a hundred determined eyes, handed over to Fremont letters from the general and the prefect which the Pathfinder read in silence, only the deepening line between his brows showing that he considered his news unwelcome.

"You will return to General Castro, sir," he said, and his eagle eyes shot out a blue-gray fire, "and tell him that I am astonished at his breach of good faith and the rudeness with which he has committed it, both of which are unworthy of an officer in his position. And I desire you to say in reply to General Castro that I peremptorily refuse compliance to an order so insulting to my government and myself."

The officer swore under his mustache and, wisely, also under his breath. Aloud he muttered something about having eighty dragoons prepared to back up the order.

"It would make no difference to me if there were eight hundred," answered Fremont. "We shall be pleased to entertain your dragoons this afternoon and the balance of your army before breakfast."

The resolute manner of the Pathfinder took away all semblance of bravado from his speech, which was backed by a low snicker from the men, coupled with a quiet handling of weapons that sent the officer hastily jingling off.

Fremont turned to his men.

"General Castro," he said quietly, "after having given us permission to conduct our expedition, now denounces us as *bandoleros*, as robbers and highwaymen, and commands us to instantly retire from the country. If we again attempt to enter California, he intimates that we shall be seized and sent prisoners to Mexico, as happened to Captain Zebulon Pike."

A murmur went around as he paused. Clayborne thrilled to the sound of it. It was like the low baying of a gathering pack.

"You have heard my answer," said Fremont, smiling a little as he gazed round. "I take it that you agree with it."

Forty hats went sailing high to loud huzzas. The Delawares sounded a war-whoop and the retreating Chavez turned on his horse at the sound and then spurred his mount. Fremont summoned Carson, Owens, Godey, Walker, Kern and Clayborne into council.

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"We must find some good position in the hills," he said. "We will throw up breastworks, raise a pole and fly the flag of our country. But—" he checked their eager response with his hand—"it flies on this occasion for defense only. We must, under no circumstance, strike the first blow. Go out and scout for that position, Clayborne; go with Carson, if you will. We shall remain here tonight and march at dawn."

The camp hummed with the news as the scouts rode out. Carson struck out immediately for the hills with Clayborne beside him, Owens, Godey and Walker taking separate directions.

"It would help," said Carson, "if we could find out where they will gather their forces. Perhaps this Hartnell will help us there through his *vaqueros*. You might ride over there later, seeing you are acquainted," he added with a quizzical glance, "though we may be late in getting back."

Clayborne did not reply. He rode on, admiring the skill with which Carson surveyed the hills and unerringly chose a path up a steep range, covered with dense undergrowth and topped with timber. At last they emerged on a small bench near the summit and Carson pointed out its advantages.

"This is *El Pico del Gavilan*," he said. "The Peak of the Hawk, and it is well named. There lies Monterey and there is the Mission of San Juan. We can play hawks in sighting and in swooping both. Plenty of timber and forage and there is a spring. This will suit the Chief."

The sun sank while they made hasty note of the position and then rode down the mountain in the violet dusk, quail whirring out before them. Once a wildcat leaped across their path and stopped to snarl at the plunging horses before it merged into the *manzanita* scrub. The camp-fires beaconed them across the plain and they arrived in time for a late supper. Hartnell had sent in a young beef by two of his *vaqueros* and the grilled steaks were welcome, washed down with coffee. It was a hard and fast rule that no liquor ever came into camp.

Later came the discussion of the various sites selected by the scout. The talk ran late under the moon and stars, the council sitting outside the commander's tent, little groups of the men about their individual fires talking in low, earnest tones or furbishing up their always ready weapons.

Fremont inclined to Hawk's Peak but brought up the same question as Carson, that of the likely rendezvous of the enemy.

The dull drumming of hoofs sounded and fifty men rose to the alert. Clayborne with a twitch at his heart that he wondered at in such a moment, recognized the pinto horse. He was sure of the rider.

MARYDEL LEE rode her nervous pony through the armed ranks boldly and drew up by Fremont and the scouts. Clayborne jumped to her stirrup but she was off her horse before he could assist her, standing slim and straight, her face alight with news.

"Captain Fremont?" she asked. Clayborne presented her.

"Our *vaqueros* brought us the news," she said. "They heard rumors of troops gathering with cannon, at the Mission San Juan. I rode over there to make sure. The rumors are true. There are two hundred men there and more coming every hour, swearing they will drive the gringos out of the country."

"Why did you risk taking the ride?" asked Fremont. "It is of the greatest use to us, but ——"

The girl's face, already ruddy in the fire, flushed.

"My uncle is not well," she said. "Or he would have gone. But I am just as American as he is. If you are defeated it means that we too, with all the American colonists in California, must go. And we are ready to back you and to fight. All of us who can use a gun. You have but to ask for volunteers and we will spread the word broadcast. This is a country for white men who will develop it, not for lazy Mexicans who rob it."

Fremont nodded and the whole camp, pressing in to hear, buzzed with applause.

"You are a very gallant young lady," said Fremont, "but, for the present, we shall not need your help. It is not politic to take the offensive. I shall send a letter to Consul Thomas Larkin, informing him of our answer and determination and I doubt not he will communicate with our squadron at Mazatlan. Armed neutrality, unless attacked, must be our motto."

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"Then," cried the girl, "let me take that letter. I know every trail and I can pass safely where one of your men might not."

Fremont hesitated for a moment, appraising the boyish form and the charm of the determined face.

"I can hardly refuse you," he said. "Yet you must be tired and your horse, too, has done duty."

"Tired?" she exclaimed. "Do you stop when you are tired? I have a better horse than this. I shall not start until dawn when they plan to hold their review. They never do anything without a review," she added contemptuously. "Your men could hold off two thousand of them."

Fremont smiled again at her enthusiasm.

"If you will wait while I make my reply, then," he said, "I will write the letter. Your example has inspired us. I shall tell the consul that, if we are hemmed in and assaulted here, we will die, every man of us, under the flag of our country."

The camp broke into loud huzzas and the girl stood with shining eyes.

"You will not die alone," she said. "We are not to be chased off like sheep, we Americans!"

"What a girl!" thought Clayborne.

While Fremont penned his letter to the consul, Clayborne walked apart with her, conscious of the envying eyes of his companions. She spoke eagerly of the conditions of the American colonists, of the petty annoyances to which they were subjected, of growing arrogance from the Mexicans, but he hardly listened. Here, he thought, and the thoughts came swiftly, without apparent volition, here was the mate for a man who intended to make this new country his home and the scene of high endeavor.

Her speech, her action showed her highly bred. She was fearless, yet he felt she could be tender. High-spirited and scornful of subterfuge—of anything but true ambition. Patriotic, charming—in a word, perfection. Things moved swiftly here. All the old bitterness seemed to have passed from his heart. He saw his folly for the Brandon heiress as a shoot of his old, artifical life. He knew that he loved this girl who had come to him out of the wild, and if he could win her—there was the rub—she would approve the best and be not merely a love-woman but a partner-wife.

"May I ride back with you?" he asked. "As far as the rancho?"

She gave him a quick look.

"If you really want to," she answered.

La Belle Rose and the unregistered pinto, in whose veins ran the blood of Spanish barbs, doubtless hobnobbed as the two went slowly across the plains in the moonlight after Marydel Lee had received the letter. Clayborne found himself talking, at first to a sympathetic listener and then to some one who gave him unqualified approval. And, when the barking of dogs told of the nearness of the rancho, hidden beyond a dip in the plain, she bade him a good-by that was both frank and friendly.

"We shall see each other again?" asked Clayborne once more.

"I hope so," she repeated.

They shook hands from the saddle, and Clayborne tingled as he watched her ride off and, on the edge of the dip, wave her hand to him.

"Marydel Lee," he said aloud, after she disappeared. "I have crossed more than half the continent to meet you and, now that I found you, I am not going to lose you, by the grace of God."

CHAPTER XII

EL PICO DEL GAVILAN

EARLY in the morning the camp was moved, not by the same route that Carson and Clayborne had taken, but up a wood road leading from the highway to Monterey, at a stream that issued from the mountain of El Gavilan. The hours were busy on the wooded flat which commanded the Plain of Salinas, the valley of San Juan and left open a retreat to the San Joaquin. The axes rang as a strong breastwork of oaks arose while a tall forty-foot sapling was prepared for a flagpole and reared amid cheers as the Stars and Stripes went up the halyards, snapping in the mountain wind. Through the glasses Castro's troops were seen gathering at the Mission of San Juan, three brass howitzers plainly visible.

Before noon two *vaqueros* from Hartnell's came up the mountain with an ox. It was impossible to drive the steer and they

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had made it fast by a *riata* to a work-ox which dragged it up to the camp. The *vaqueros* butchered it and the smell of the blood drove the work-ox wild. For a few minutes he owned the camp until lassoed and snubbed into submission. The *vaqueros* brought word that Mansos Indians were being brought into the Mission camp and plied with drink. The cowboys were half-breeds and appeared thoroughly loyal to their American master who treated them, they said, "not like peons, but like men."

After the meal the men made personal preparations for defense. Clayborne was told off as an officer to give out powder and ball, of which there was an abundance. The Delawares painted themselves with vermilion and slowly rode round the camp, chanting a song of war and death. Scipio stripped himself for battle to a loin cloth and selected an ax to supplement his smaller one. But the day passed without other movement at the Mission, save parades. Sentries were set for the night with the Delawares as outposts, but there were no alarms.

"The general hesitates to attack without direct word from Mexico, I fancy," said Fremont, "but the fire is lit and sooner or later we'll have to extinguish it."

Clayborne saw a subtle change in the commander. The intrepid explorer and scientist had become merged in the warrior.

"I expect and hope to make my home here," said Fremont. "And I hope to make the country safe for others. If they will only start something!"

He echoed the sentiment of the camp. All lay on their arms and it was a disgruntled company that assembled to a too quiet breakfast. They did not talk overmuch but, every little while, they glanced up at the rippling flag above them and set themselves to putting a superfluous polish on the metal of their weapons, retesting the edges of their bowie-knives and changing the priming caps on their rifles. Some drew their charges and replaced them, though the air was dry.

Half way through the morning an outpost challenged and a Delaware brought in Marydel Lee, who was afoot, having left her pony lower down the mountain. She smiled at Clayborne, her face showing no signs of fatigue as she glanced with interested approval at the camp with its sturdy defenders, the very flower of Americanism, and presented a letter to Fremont. He read it with satisfaction and repeated the last paragraph aloud.

"'You will, without thought of expense or trouble, call on me, or send to me, in every case of need, not only as your consul, but as your friend and countryman.' So says our Consul at Monterey."

Up went the whirling sombreros again with a yell that should have reached the uneasy ears of General Castro.

"A sloop-of-war has been requested to protect American interests," went on Fremont. "There are five ships of ours at Mazatlan and I don't doubt they'll send us one of them."

Sagundai interrupted the ovation with news of a body of cavalry coming up the wood road from the Monterey highway.

"Two hundred men and one cannon!" he announced. The news went round the camp like wild-fire but there was no cheering, only looks of satisfaction. Before Fremont could give the eagerly expected orders, the girl pressed forward.

"If there is fighting," she said, "recruits will come in to you fast. The Americans in Monterey are ready to move, with you as leader. My uncle has sent and received messages to all our neighbors. Shall I carry word?"

"There has been no fighting as yet," said Fremont. "The ban is directed against me and my force; there is no use in embroiling all the colonists in a strife for which we are unprepared. We will teach our enemies a lesson in a very few minutes, I hope. Clayborne, I leave the fort in your charge, with nine men. This may be a ruse, but the Delawares will give warning. If we are pressed hard, or you, it will be easy for us to get back to the fort."

He picked out the nine men for Clayborne's company, much to their disgust, and, heading the rest, passed over the breastwork, gliding down the slopes, to melt with them into the heavy brush. Scipio had gone with Fremont, his scouting qualities recognized long since. Clayborne, with the girl, went to the side of the fort commanding the sortie and watched and listened. Sound of Fremont and his men there was none. They would take up ambush under cover, according

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to Fremont's plan, throw out challengers and provoke the first blow.

The wind blew up the mountain steadily but without noise. The steady *riprap* of the flag was at first the only sound, then came the faint tinkle of accouterments from the ascending troop, the swiftly suppressed neigh of a horse, instantly answered by the animals within the camp corral. Then all sounds ceased while they strained their ears for a shot, a shout of command. From the inside of the breastwork they could not see the wood road, save for a short stretch.

Presently Sagundai emerged from the trees close to the *abattis*, like a shadow. His painted face held a look of utter disgust.

"Ugh, *Mexicanos* all coward, all same dogs!" he reported to Clayborne. "They got um weak stomach. They all same squaws. They come on little way; they stop; they heap much powwow. Too hot, too steep! Then all go back same way they come. No good, no fight, no scalp!"

The men came back in twos and threes, repeating the same story. Long before they reached the ambush set for them, the Mexicans had consulted and turned back again. Fremont seemed the only one at all content.

"Miss Lee," he said, "it does not look as if they mean to attack, but I shall stay here long enough to show Castro and the governor that we are not to be intimidated. If nothing happens I shall modify my plans and travel down the San Joaquin to the Sacramento, working north to Oregon. I shall stop and talk with your uncle before I leave Salinas plain. Will you convey my thanks to him for the meat he has sent us, and the news. For yourself, it is hard for me to express the appreciation of what you have done. I shall be glad to provide you with an escort to the rancho."

But Marydel Lee to Clayborne's chagrin would have none of this, for he had hoped for the detail. But the girl was really safer alone and it was no time to spare any men from the little fortress when at any moment an attack might be made in force. It did not seem possible that Castro would employ the tactics of the Duke of York in marching his men half way up the hill and down again. But it turned out that Castro had his reasons.

Clayborne was forced to content himself with the knowledge that he would see the girl again before they left the country.

ALL through the long hours the men's impatience grew and, while supper was cooking, a deputation of them, with Scipio and the Delawares included, came resolutely over to where Fremont was writing in his diary. Archambeau and Lajeunesse seemed to have been selected as the orators of the malcontents, but the first became embarrassed under the quizzical glance of his commander and even the fluent Basil had to be nudged on by one of the band that backed him—lean, sunburnt men, dressed in stained deerskin or in blue flannel, their chins on their rifles, pistols in their belts with a bowie-knife and an additional blade in a sheath attached to a cross-belt, the handle conveniently in the center of the breast. Here and there among them showed the fierce faces of the Indians.

"Go on, Basil," said Fremont. "What is it?"

The Frenchman stammered for an opening.

"Why, you—you know what it is, captain," he said. "Let us go down between the sunset and the moonrise and clean out that kennel of curs at San Juan. We'll give them such a lesson as they will hand down to their children's children, if they have any, for, if you give the word, we will see that none of that yapping crowd is left to breathe or breed."

A low growl of assent followed his plea, but Fremont shook his head.

"You told the girl it was our private quarrel," said Lajeunesse. "Are we children to be told where to go and what to do and not to do?"

"It is just because it is our private quarrel, Basil," said Fremont, "that we must not let them use it to their advantage. I cannot embroil the government of the United States over my own affairs. The foe may be cowardly but they are organized. The Americans in California are widely spread. We must wait. I do not think it will be long, and I promise you we shall all be in the thick of it."

Basil looked at him pleadingly but Fremont never repeated speech or order and the men turned reluctantly away. But an idea was born in Clayborne's head.

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If Fremont was to trail to the north and it seemed evident that he now used the scientific purposes of the expedition merely to mark time until his special messenger should arrive or news of war come through the consulate, why would not an organization of the American colonists be advisable? More of them were located about San Francisco Bay, mainly to the direct north and south. Castro had sufficiently shown his hand to arouse their indignation. Why could not he, using such arguments as might come up from time to time, crystallize such sentiment, laying plans for central meetings, for enlistment, even for secret drill? Then, when Fremont's moment came, recruits would be on hand.

He thought it over during the night. and resolved to take it up with Fremont before they left Hawk's Peak. If the suggestion that he would be closer to Marydel Lee leavened the idea, it should be written in fairness that the suggestion did not conceive it.

The next morning dragged. Little activity was seen at San Juan. The Delawares reported clouds of dust on the roads, as if the enemy was withdrawing. The wind began to rise. A hawk had hung in the air above the peak since an hour after dawn and, by noon, the gale was too strong for him to maintain position against it, plane as he would. With a screech he whirled off for timber, to sulk there till his hunting ground was in better shape. The forty-foot sapling swayed like a whip. For lack of suitable rope it had not been stayed, but its base was supported by loose rocks. At four in the afternoon it fell to the ground amid a general shout and a rush too late to support it. To the Delawares this fall of the flag seemed a bad omen and some of the voyagers appeared disposed to share their superstition but Fremont laughed at it.

"It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good," he declared. "If it is a sign from Heaven, as Sagundai seems to think, it is a sign that should be read as time for us to break camp. We can't stay here indefinitely, that is certain; we have remained as long as the occasion requires."

He gave immediate orders to break camp and the mountain was descended before sunset, the new site selected being close to Hartnell's rancho. *Vaqueros* came galloping out to meet them, bearing an invitation for Fremont and his officers to take supper. Carson, Owens and Kern, with Clayborne, accompanied the Pathfinder.

Hartnell was recovering slowly from an accident brought about in the breaking of a colt which had rolled upon him, smashing no bones but bruising him and stiffening his muscles. His niece, on a visit from Sonoma, had assisted her aunt in combining the duties of nurse and housekeeper.

AFTER the bountiful meal the talk became general, gradually centering on the situation.

"The Indian *rancheros* have got to be wiped out," declared Hartnell. "It is bad enough down here but north of the Bay things are getting unbearable. The boil is festering, sir, I tell you. It is coming to a head. It must be lanced or it will spread and infect the whole body of us."

"And what," asked Fremont, "do you suggest as a present remedy?"

"A bold front on all sides, since you will not act as leader in open rebellion. Organization of some kind."

It was Clayborne's cue and he took it.

"The idea is a good one," said Fremont, when Clayborne had finished speaking. "I had some vague plans along those lines for you. You will have to act without authority, with no sign of connection with me. I will go this far with you. Should I learn, at any time, that our government has, in any way, recognized the existence of war with Mexico, I shall return from wherever the message may reach me, post haste, and place my services, officially or otherwise, at the disposal of a force calculated to preserve California from conquest by another country or to avoid the retreat of American colonists.

"Meanwhile I shall travel north by very easy stages, up the Sacramento Valley and across the lava beds to Klamath Lake. I shall not be hard to find, coming or going.

"I presume you may wish to remain here and consult with Mr Hartnell," Fremont continued, with what Clayborne self-consciously imagined a twinkle in his eye. "We will have a talk together tonight but it will be a week before I am more than a day's ride for your mare."

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It suited Clayborne and he said so, with a side glance at Marydel Lee, who sat beside her aunt, her face faintly flushed.

"Did you know," asked Hartnell, "that last October, armed Californians, who testify freely that they acted under orders and the protection of the sub-prefect of Yerba Buena, attacked Captain Libbey of the American bark *Tasso* and left him for dead, weltering in his blood in the gutter? And that Nathan Spear, who has been here for many years, only just out-ran murder, intended by the same gang, licensed by the sub-prefect who is swaggering free through the town today?

"North of Sonoma the Indians butchered the family of an American in the hills. They —" he lowered his voice, speaking so that only Fremont and the men next to him could hear—"skinned the men and drove stakes through the women while they were all alive, besides other mutilations. Those Indians have never been punished. The Mexican magistrate said truly that there were no witnesses to identify the perpetrators, but the blond scalp of one woman and the brown tresses of another hang today in the lodge of a Mendocino chief.

"The whole tribe should have been treated with reprisal. That is why my brother-in-law sent Marydel down here—my sister is dead. But she insists upon returning. Perhaps she is as safe there as here now. I tell you, Captain Fremont, wholesale outrage is imminent. The Indians drive off our stock and fire our wheat fields, and nothing is done about it."

The talk ran late, long after the two women had disappeared, and Fremont supplemented it with a conversation with Clayborne in his tent.

"I think that you can see farther than some," he said, gripping Clayborne's hand. "Use your head, your eyes, ears and tongue. You will know the decisive moment sooner than I, perhaps. Then join me with all speed, bringing your lists of men and supplies and the plans you have formulated. Hartnell will help you down here. Now, good-night and good-luck to you in every way at Sonoma. I am glad to have had you with me. I I am sorry to lose you and I trust to have you with me again before long."

Clayborne's elation was tempered with more serious thoughts. The visions of such atrocities as Hartnell had mentioned made his face grim. Marydel had been exposed to such horrors, was returning to the neighborhood where they had occurred, a place where Mexican authority not only winked at but encouraged massacre and torture. A deep hate for such a race blended with his resolve to guard the girl with his life and all his wits might compass.

He found Carson and his friend Owens sitting up smoking with Lajeunesse and discussing the matter, though it was well after midnight.

"I blame the Mexicans more than I do the Indians," said Carson. "They set them a bad example in the first place and then pat them on the back. They're half-breeds mostly and I never saw a breed yet who wasn't spoiled on both sides. Equal portions of Spaniard and Indian raise the devil. You have seen something of the Indian handling of prisoners, Clayborne, God grant you never will see them touch women. If you do, and they ever capture one who's dear to you, you'll turn devil yourself and set out to make a girdle of their scalps, like Freeman of Kentucky when they butchered his sweetheart."

In the light of later events it almost seemed to Clayborne as if Carson had been prophetic that night. It was not long before there was to be an Indian massacre at Taos, with the narrowest of escapes for Carson's wife, the daughter of Beaubien.

"We'll have our share of Indian fighting before we get back, my friend," said Lajeunesse. "The Klamaths are fierce fighters, worse than the Blackfeet. Their arrows are tipped with iron and barbed so you have to cut away the flesh to get them out—poisoned too."

"Where do they get the iron?" asked Owens.

"Well," drawled Carson, "there's a Hudson Bay post on the Umpquah River in Oregon, not far from Klamath Lake. I leave you to draw your own conclusions. I'm going to roll in. Good night, Clayborne. We'll see you again."

He rolled himself in his blanket and set his head on his saddle. Soon all the camp was sleeping, and finally Clayborne lay down and forced himself to relaxation and, at last, to slumber.

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CHAPTER XIII

LIEUTENANT CHAVEZ

CLAYBORNE, riding with Fremont the next day, expected to return to the Hartnell rancho by noon but events fell out otherwise. He had acquainted Scipio of his intentions, giving the black to understand that he was a free man in every sense. But Scipio had no trouble in stating his mind.

"This is a fine country, Misteh Clayborne," he said. "I jus' natcherly wants to git a slice of it fo' myse'f. If I can buy it by fightin' fo' it, that suits me. An' from what I heah, they's likely to be fightin' soon an' frequent, right in this neighb'hood. I'll stay along with you jus' as long as I'm welcome."

The train had stopped for the noon-day meal when a man with a flaming red beard came galloping up on a tired horse. His first accents as he asked for Fremont, proclaimed him English. The captain was seated with his officers' mess, and, not liking the man's address, did not rise.

"Your name and business, sir?" he asked.

"My name is Gilbert," said the Englishman. "My business is private."

"I have no private business when I am in the field," said Fremont shortly. "What is it?"

"I am empowered to treat with you by General Castro. I have a communication for you. I mounted to Hawk's Peak last evening in the character of envoy and found your fires still burning. At the request of the general I have followed you."

He held out a letter. Fremont did not offer to take it.

"I can conceive of no news from General Castro that would interest me," he said. "Nor can I understand his sending an envoy to a mere *bandolero*, as he has chosen to term me and my men."

The Englishman turned crimson under his tan.

"Diplomacy sometimes forces the use of language that would not otherwise be selected," he said. "I come in good faith, knowing you would not be disposed to treat with a native of the country."

Fremont rose.

"Dismount and join us," he said. "If I have misjudged you, accept my apologies. You will eat with us. We can take up the letter afterwards."

The envoy was hungry but he was anxious and nervous, soon through his meal. Then Fremont broke the seals of the document. Thunder gathered on his brows and angry lightning shot from his eyes as he thrust the paper in the fire.

"I presume you knew the contents of that communication," he said. "My action is my answer. General Castro honors me with an invitation to join forces with him in an attempt to overthrow Governor Pico and proclaim California a republic. He has mistaken me and my men. We are Americans. Once we establish a government we do not lightly upset it. We stand for law and order, not for filibustering."

"I believe you have not always been so averse to revolutions," countered Gilbert, biting his lips.

"As an Englishman you should have authentic record of that event," retorted Fremont calmly. "I will remind you that thereby we won something we cherish. Freedom! I can not see that the rule of General Castro—or President Castro—especially when set up by his own unauthorized ambitions, will help to free California. I would suggest that you acquaint the general with my answer without delay."

He said no more and the Englishman, baffled by the quiet stares of all the party, remounted and rode off.

"Treachery seems to be the main card of the Mexican make-up," said Fremont. "I shall hope to personally persuade General Castro of my convictions before we leave California."

It was late afternoon when Clayborne and Scipio started for the Hartnell rancho. Clayborne, as they rode, planned to offer himself as escort to the returning Marydel Lee. Her father would be the first man he would consult in Sonoma, he decided. He was in high spirits and Scipio, gazing at him with affection, rejoiced to see his attitude.

"Mule," he apostrophized his mount which he had refused to discard for a horse, "they's two things that counts fo' happiness with a man. One's fightin' an' t'other's the right woman. I'm thinking Misteh Clayborne's goin' to be tol'able content from now on."

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It was after sunset when they arrived. Supper had been kept for them, and Marydel joined Clayborne at the meal. Her aunt was with her husband who was suffering a relapse from his excitement of the night before.

The ranch-house was built according to the Californian style, of adobe walls, red tiled, built in the shape of a hollow square with a *patio* garden in the center, reached by an arch through the front of the house that, after dark, was closed by barred doors. A stream had been piped to the garden and a little fountain tinkled among the palms and flowers.

Clayborne and the girl sat under an arcade that ran around the inner walls. The moon turned the fountain to a jet of silver spray; the light air was perfumed from climbing vines. Marydel had a guitar and now and then she touched it lightly and sang, first in Spanish and then in English.

It was a night for romance and the two forgot all but their youth and the pleasure of the moment. The sound of the girl's voice, her dainty figure, shadowy in the dusk, gowned now in some pale, filmy muslin, the butterfly flitting of her fingers over the strings, were to Clayborne as balm to a bruise.

"Your family is from the South, is it not?" he asked. "Lee is a Southern name and there is something in your accent that is reminiscent."

"It wasn't hard to guess, was it?" she answered. "Father is from Virginia, a younger son who came out here with mother to seek their fortune. I came with them, ten years ago, when I was just half my present age. Then mother died. She liked California but I think she loved Virginia best. It was a runaway match. She used to tell me of the old house and plantation on the James. Do you know this song?"

She broke off and started a rippling accompaniment to an air that Clayborne knew only too well—a Creole *chanson* that Lucille Brandon used to sing while her sister played the harp. Clayborne shaded his eyes with his hand. He had forgotten Lucille but now the memory was poignant with unpleasant recollection. His name and honor were still under a cloud. That must be cleared away before he could even think, much less mention, love to the girl beside him. And he ached with the desire of her, knowing it to be love that was real and lasting. She was quick to sense his mood and her song ceased, while the melody trailed away.

"I am sorry," she said softly. "I am afraid I have chosen badly—perhaps sadly."

She had set her hand on the bench between them. It seemed to Clayborne a friendly overture that he longed to meet half way. Short though their acquaintance was, he felt certain she would not resent it if he set his own fingers over hers. There was a mutual understanding between them, an established sympathy that was surely soil for happy blossoming and fruition.

"It is nothing," he said, hesitating upon the brink of confiding in her. But that, he realized, would not be sufficient. She might believe, might accept him as honorable, but there would always be the shadow of rumor, like a beast lurking in the dark, ready to leap out at an unsuspected moment. The higher he rose in this new land the more shining mark he would be and, some day, some one would come out from Louisiana and brand him as a cheat. To contemplate involving her in that was intolerable.

"I am sorry," she said again and her voice trembled a little. She had a rose in her hair and she took it out and laid it gently beside him.

THEN there came a knocking at the gates and some one came out of the kitchen quarters and passed along the arcade to the entrance. Clayborne heard a brief colloquy in Spanish, then the jingle of spurs and the sound of swaggering footsteps. A cavalier clad in Spanish gala clothes, with wide mouthed pantaloons of velvet, silver buttoned, with a velvet jacket laced with silver above a silk shirt, a fringed scarf about the hips, a cloak swung back over one shoulder, came confidently forward. His high-crowned sombrero; heavy with silver, swept the ground, a *cigarro* glowed in his mouth. He removed it as he spoke.

"*Buenas noches, señorita.*"

The girl shrank a little toward Clayborne as the latter recognized the Mexican who had brought the first peremptory message from Castro, Lieutenant Chavez.

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He thought he detected partial intoxication in the voice. Marydel Lee stood up and so did Clayborne.

"Speak English, if you please," she said. "I prefer it, as you know. And Mr Clayborne——"

"I understand Spanish," said Clayborne, stepping out of the shadow.

"Ha!" Chavez started back as he caught sight of Clayborne's face in the moonlight. "I thought the gringo *bandoleros* had all gone." Then he drew himself up, turning his shoulder to Clayborne. "I shall speak English since you make it a wish, *sí*. That language I speak—but not American."

Clayborne tapped him lightly on the shoulder, speaking in Spanish.

"I shall have a word with you concerning that *bandolero* business before you leave, *señor*," he said in a low tone. Chavez continued to ignore him.

"I had mean' to play the bear at your window, *señorita*," said the Mexican. "But this is more pleasan', in the garden by the moon. An' here is your guitar. I shall seeng you a serenade."

He picked up the instrument from the bench, flung its ribbon across his shoulders, tried the strings and started in a reedy baritone.

"Qucrida mia, estrella clara."

Clayborne stood by, his fist clenched, waiting for a sign from the girl. He caught her glance, deprecating yet appealing. And he tapped Chavez once more on the shoulder, not so gently.

"Miss Lee does not care for music," he said.

Chavez stared insolently back

"Carrajol" he commenced, laying aside the guitar.

Clayborne's fingers sank like steel hooks into his flesh.

"And she does not care for that kind of language," he added. "If you can not talk more pleasantly than you sing, it will be better if you keep quiet."

The Mexican struggled to release himself and, as he was silent, Clayborne let him go. Instantly he sprang back, his face distorted and dark with rage, evidently trying to master himself sufficiently for speech.

"You forbid me to seeng, to speak, *señor?*" he said at last with a sneer that was backed by some confidence that was very evident. "But I weel make you seeng, and to a tune that I shall play." He raised his voice. "Pedro! José!"

Two troopers came out of the archway, their sabers clanking. The girl wheeled upon Chavez with her eyes flashing.

"How dare you?" she cried. "How dare you? Our boys shall drive those men off unless you send them away."

"Keep out of this, Miss Lee," begged Clayborne. "I can handle it. Do not get your uncle mixed up in my affray. Never mind your *vaqueros*. Scipio!"

He knew that Scipio was in the kitchen quarters and knew that he would recognize the note of warning in his call. The big black came promptly gliding through the *patio*. The troopers hesitated. Mrs. Hartnell came out of her husband's room to the arcade, followed by Hartnell himself, limping between two canes. The action was swift, almost simultaneous.

"What's this?" cried Hartnell.

"A quarrel between this officer and myself," answered Clayborne. "I beg you, Mr Hartnell, not to interfere. This man is one of Castro's *aides*."

"You speak truly, *señor*," said Chavez. "It is true that I stand very highly with General Castro. And, when I inform the general that the *señorita* has made herself prominent against our government in aid of the *bandoleros*, that she visited the *bandoleros'* camp alone, and at night, that she carried messages for this Fremont, why I theenk that the general weel thank me. It is very possible he weel appoint me to breeng in the *señorita* as a prisoner. That would be too bad. Yet, as my prisoner, I would treat her kindly. But I have not yet told this to the general."

"Mollie," said Hartnell to his wife, quietly enough, though there was a tinge of anxiety in his voice, "you had better get me my pistols."

"Wait," cried Clayborne. "Lieutenant Chavez, you forget one thing—that the *bandoleros*, as you call them, are less than ten miles away. A word to them, an act from you against Miss Lee or her friends, and you and your general will be lacking a command!"

"Perhaps. How is it that you, *señor*, are so far from your little army? Perhaps you had a meeting arranged with the *señorita*. *Sí?* Moonlight, music and—kisses?"

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Clayborne jumped for him and he leaped back with considerable agility, shouting to his men. A knife flashed out from his belt. Clayborne caught the wrist overhand as it descended for the blow, pulling hard upon the arm, trebling Chavez' own effort and throwing him off his balance to his knees. The troopers started to draw their sabers and run in but the blades never left the scabbards. Scipio sprang like a black panther, cupped a great palm against each head on the outside and cracked their skulls together with a thud that sent one straight to the ground, the other reeling aimlessly.

Clayborne stooped and savagely ground the bones of Chavez' wrist until the dagger fell upon the gravel. He picked up the Mexican in his arms as if he had been a naughty child, kicked away the weapon and carried his struggling, cursing burden toward the little fountain. Its water fell into a round basin of stone, pretty enough but coated with green slime. Into this circular trough about the vase of the fountain Clayborne packed the lieutenant, as a sardine is curved into its can.

A scared frog or two jumped out as the sputtering Chavez in all his gaudy clothes displaced them. One hand at his hip, the other in his collar, Clayborne held him under water until he began to choke. Then he let him get up, a slimy, dripping figure in ruined finery, glaring at Clayborne, who coolly surveyed him.

The man who had fallen stunned was moaning feebly and making no effort to sit up. Scipio had yanked the other off his feet, stretched him across a bench and deliberately spanked him with the flat of his own saber.

"*Buenas noches, señor,*" said Clayborne.

Chavez cast him a look of baffled and revengeful rage, strode to the groaning prostrate trooper and kicked him to his feet. Scipio let the other go, retaining both the sabers as trophies. Chavez retrieved his hat, the only dry thing left to him, and vanished with his men through the arch. They heard the sound of retreating hoofs before Scipio closed the doors again for the night.

"I am sorry," began Clayborne. Laughter interrupted him. Marydel Lee was sending out peal after peal of silvery chiming.

"Chavez—in the fountain—curled up and helpless—like an eel in a pipe! And Scipio, disciplining the trooper! Are all the men of Fremont as quick and strong as you are?"

Clayborne joined in her infectious mirth for a moment.

"I fear I was too quick," he said, "but the fellow's foul mouth had to be stopped. It needed washing also. So—the fountain was handy. I trust, Mr. Hartnell that I have not made matters difficult for you. If Castro tries reprisal——?"

"I do not think he will," said Hartnell. "I have to thank you for the lesson you administered. I should have shot him myself in a moment, since I could not thrash him. Marydel goes to Sonoma tomorrow or the next day. Perhaps it had better be tomorrow. I do not think Castro will bother me. We are fairly strong in Salinas plain, we Americans, and I do not think he will be anxious to start trouble. With Marydel he might have some cause for complaint since she, with my sanction, played messenger. But, with her away, I think we can dismiss Chavez and Castro. It is fortunate that we can count upon the escort of you and Scipio for my niece to Sonoma, as I suppose we may?"

"I shall be more than pleased," said Clayborne with a bow that he used as cover to look at Marydel. She had stopped laughing. The moonlight was very brilliant. As she turned to him to make an exaggerated courtesy of thanks, their eyes met, held, established an intent that was more than merely cordial, and the rose that showed faintly on the cheeks of Marydel Lee spread until face and neck plainly disclosed the blush. But she held her ground—held out her hand to Clayborne with a pressure that was distinct.

"I too shall be pleased," she said. "And I thank you for what you did. When you meet my father he will thank you also, better than I can, perhaps, but not more sincerely."

"Not better than you can, Marydel Lee," thought Clayborne as he bowed again over her hand. "Better than you will, maybe, better than I can dare to hope for." For he had read that magic something in the girl's eyes that told him he might ask much without denial and the memory of the night at Belle Rose when the pricked cards had been flung upon the table was very fresh upon him.

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CHIVALRY was chaperon in the West those days. Their journey was broken by stages that brought them to various ranchos where they stopped for the night, but the way was otherwise a happy picnic. Clayborne threw off his own melancholy at the rallies of Marydel Lee and, rashly, gave himself up to the enjoyment of the hours.

Scipio kept a discreet distance, confiding his thoughts to the mule, a delighted commentary on the way things, to his mind, were shaping.

"She ain't biggity, this one, like that Brandon lady," Scipio said. "But, put the two togetheh, this Missy Lee like a fine wax candle to a tallow dip, shine mo' an' las' longeh."

They rode along *el Camino Real*, the King's Highway, first trailed by the sandals of the mission *padres*, in all the soft, golden weather of Californian Summer, up the valley of Santa Clara, past the mission of San José and so to the sandy dunes back of Yerba Buena where the wild flowers rioted, golden poppies, blue and yellow lupines, and the tang of the sea cooled the sun.

Past the Mission Dolores they rode down to the little *pueblo* lying sleepy at the tip of the peninsula that formed the southern portal of what Fremont had named the Golden Gate, a sleepy Spanish town of less than a hundred inhabitants already leavened by American enterprise, as yet unpopular.

They gazed over the vacant harbor, beyond verdant islets, north to the purple dome of Tamalpais, then to the eastern mainland, oak-clad to the tops of its rolling hills, a peak or two outstanding in the middle distance, and, far away, like clouds, the snowy minarets of the High Sierra. Yerba Buena, with its score of houses, tucked between hills, seemed inconsequential.

"It is a lonely scene, isn't it?" asked the girl. "Yet father says that such a harbor, with such a climate and such fertility, must inevitably see great commerce."

"There is no doubt of it," answered Clayborne. "Under American rule. Hundreds have come and thousands will follow over the prairies and across the ranges. The Indians will be conquered or pacified. The railroad will link the two oceans; that is one great ambition of Fremont the Pathfinder, one chief aim of his surveys. The ships will carry the produce and bring back trade from India and from China, from all the ports of South America and the East Indies. And you and I will live to see that day," he ended, daring to add, "and our children will reap the harvest of our sowing."

He felt her glance and mentally uncapped to her adroit answer.

"I think that you are right but, oh, how I wish I had been born a man!"

They made their way to the house of a mutual friend of Lee and Hartnell, a trader in hides and tallow, named Black. His place was part store, part residence. While his wife greeted Marydel, Black arranged to take them to the north end of San Francisco Bay in his flat-bottomed scow schooner, which would also accommodate the horses. Nor, when he got an outline of Clayborne's business, would he talk of payment.

"You go down and see Liedesdorf," he said. "Ask him to show you the news of that *junta* they held on the eleventh. You'll need to get in touch with him sooner or later and you might as well do it first as last. Tide won't be right for us to sail until about noon. You go down and have a chin with Liedesdorf.

"I'll tell you one thing, the Americans in Yerba Buena are tired of the way the Mexicans override us. We petitioned for a ship to protect us last October, after they attacked Captain Libbey and Spear, but we haven't got one yet. Show us where we can head in and we'll head, especially if Fremont's bossing the job. He's a good man."

The vice-consul showed him a copy of the records of the *junta*, or war-council, which, after a long preamble citing the misdeeds of Fremont and his followers, simmered down to the determination that the services of General Castro, as Commander-in-Chief, were urgently required in the northern part of the territory for the defense against threatening manifestations. General Castro's headquarters were to be at Santa Clara.

"They will be issuing *bandas* (proclamations) before long," said Liedesdorf, "that will order us all out of the country with our possessions forfeited."

"You seriously think that is imminent?" asked Clayborne.

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"The arrival of ships-of-war at Monterey and San Francisco might avert it. But friction is inevitable. Look out for Guadalupe Vallejo. The general, with Colonel Salvador Vallejo and Colonel Pruden, are Castro's three best men.

"But, whatever I can do, count on my best efforts."

THEY went down to the schooner and all through that Summer afternoon they sailed up the great harbor with green hills all about them, past Emerald Island, then by rocky islets and shoals. But the Sacramento, while it brought down silt, carved a deep channel as it rushed out through the confining Carquinez Straits to merge with the Bay and, the flood tide back of them, with just enough wind for steerage way, they entered Napa Creek, bordered with high *tule* rushes, and landed.

An hour's ride brought them in sight of the Lee rancho. From a hill Clayborne gazed due south down the long miles of water. The great harbor, formed into two wings by the channel of the Golden Gate sea-entrance, stretched away until the distant hills were lost in haze.

The father of Marydel welcomed him cordially. Later he thanked Clayborne for his services to his daughter. He also arranged many conferences with the neighboring settlers and helped Clayborne to arrive at a list of who was to be counted upon, who timid, who overbold, which one had horses and which could furnish supplies.

Every little while there came in news of depredations by Indians, of slights by Mexicans, injustices by the local *jefes politicos* (judges) and every day Clayborne watched the slow flame of American resentment kindle while his information grew and the colonists began to link together. One man, William Ide, he found especially useful, already a leader and eminently a fighting man.

On the afternoon of the first of May, Ide rode over to the Lee rancho in high excitement.

"If your friend Fremont doesn't arrive pretty soon, Clayborne," he said, "we'll have to send for him or take the matter into our own hands. We've got to be prepared from now on. I'm going to form a company of emergency men. I know of thirty who will answer a call to arms at any moment. Read this *banda* issued by the Prefect of Monterey and given by his vice to Leidesdorf."

Monterey, April 30, 1846.

Being informed that a multitude of foreigners abusing our local circumstances without having come with the requisites provided by law, are residing in the district, and that many of them who should not be admitted into this country, have made themselves owners of real property, this being a right belonging only to citizens:

I have concluded to instruct all the judges having towns under their (respective) charge, that they can not, without incurring great responsibility, permit or authorize any sale or cession whatever of land, or of said class of property, outside of established regulations and in favor of Mexican citizens; advising those foreigners that are not naturalized and legally introduced that whatever purchase or acquisition they may make will be null and void, and that they will be subject, unless they retire voluntarily from the country, to be expelled from it whenever the government may find it convenient. GOD AND LIBERTY.

"They signed it, 'God and Liberty!'" exploded Ide. "Death and the devil! To be expelled, unless we go out voluntarily, 'whenever the government may find it convenient.' That means: America, get out! I'm telling you that the Mexican government is going to find it——inconvenient before they drive us off our lands and confiscate our cattle.

"If Fremont is waiting for government assurance, we can't afford to. Our lives as well as our lands are at stake—the honor of our women—the safety of our children. They'll let the Indians loose on us. By the Eternal, if we can't fight under the Stars and Stripes we'll fight under a flag of our own. Fight like grizzlies, tusk and claw!"

Marydel Lee leaned forward, her eyes shining.

"And I'll design the flag," she said. "The flag for your company—a grizzly bear on a white ground. The Bear Flag!"

"We'll be using it before long," said Ide.

"If we wait much longer we shall wait in our graves. And I, for one, do not intend to go there without company."

That night Marydel Lee commenced to make the white flag with the grizzly bear as emblem.

CHAPTER XIV

CLAYBORNE SNUFFS A CANDLE

THERE were other hot-bloods besides Ide among the Sonoma settlers and Clayborne began to have his difficulties. Since the issuance of the *banda* the colonists

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had commenced a correspondence between themselves and he was able to keep in touch with the general movements without wasting time in long rides. Hartnell, from Salinas plain, reported favorably. Clayborne at Sonoma found himself regarded as a recruiting agent for Fremont, and the Pathfinder was looked forward to as the Moses who would lead them out of their difficulties. Accordingly, Clayborne's lists grew until they held the names of some two hundred and fifty prospective soldiers. Among Ide's closest adherents and counselors for an active movement against the Mexicans, was a young man named Lawton from Missouri, a big-boned, blustery blond giant, whose opposition to Clayborne was without doubt tinged by the very obvious fact that he was a suitor for the hand of Marydel Lee. Lee himself had favored him, it appeared, and Marydel had been kind enough to him so that, without a rival in the field, Lawton had considered the prize his and had not hurried especially in claiming it.

Now Clayborne, with speech and manners and wit that outshone Lawton continually, appeared upon the scene in somewhat the light of a hero, patently impressed by the charms of Marydel, quietly appropriating her upon occasion and favored by the lady herself. Clayborne, urged by Lawton's earnest rivalry, found himself committed to deeds and speeches that soberer reflection told him were unwarranted in the remembrance of what had happened at Belle Rose.

As for Marydel, if she were in love with Clayborne—or with Lawton—she was first of all a woman, her charms heightened in her own eyes by the rivalry and, beyond a doubt, she coquetted. Whether this coquetry was designed more to hold off Lawton or bring Clayborne to an avowal could, perhaps, have hardly been answered, even by herself.

She was piqued at Clayborne's alternate warmth and coolness. She saw love plainly in his eyes and found words trembling on his tongue. Explanation of his attitude brought up many theories that were not all flattering to Clayborne. Either he was a faint-heart where love was concerned, or he set the present stress before love, which Marydel could not appreciate—or he was amusing himself.

This last thought always left her indignant and inclined to rouse false hopes in Lawton. Then Lawton, deftly for a man of his type, suggested that no one knew anything of Clayborne's antecedents. He had been left behind by Fremont and he put up a clever story but he was eminently of another type than Fremont's voyagers. He had without a doubt been with them but a few months. Who was he? Perhaps he had left the land of the "big Blue" under a cloud—perhaps he had a wife.

This innuendo stabbed Marydel to the heart and with its sudden anguish she knew that she loved this man, this gentleman-adventurer with his courtesy and chivalry, his charms of speech and manner and person, his bravery, his wit. Clayborne had told her nothing to controvert these hints of Lawton's; she could not ask him.

She remembered his sudden gesture when she had sung the little Creole *chanson*. It had been a love song and it had made him sad. The pain in her heart gave way to a hot flood of jealousy and at night Marydel buried her burning cheeks on her pillow, wondering at the emotions that rocked her nature—hitherto well balanced, demurely looking on men as subjects of her will, her look—praying quietly, before she went to sleep that Clayborne was all the man her heart wished him.

On the American frontier the first suffragism was established. Men and women were inevitably made equal in the common hardship and danger, the overcoming of the wilderness. As with Bearcat Bowers' tiny wife, the spirits of the women ranged with those of the men made them strong to perform a full share. Many a woman worked about the house with eyes that kept watch and ward while her man was absent, tending her cradle or her wifely tasks, with the rifle handy. So the right to share the counsels of individual homestead or community came to them inevitably and without challenge.

Thus, when Ide, Lawton and some others of "Ide's Thirty" minutemen, gathered at Lee's to talk over the outlook, Marydel was with them, sewing steadily at the Bear Flag, lifting her eyes from the flying needle to examine the faces of the speakers.

"IT SEEMS to me," said Lawton, in the middle of May, "that Fremont is a cat that prefers to wait for the milk to stand until the cream is thick enough for his own liking. Where is he

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and what is he doing, Clayborne? You are his field-lieutenant; surely you can let us into the secret, if you know it? Look you, the wild oats are already beginning to dry in the sun. In a week or so the wheat will be ready for harvest—or for an Indian torch.

"Where I was raised," Lawton went on with a provoking drawl, "the chap who waited until the other fellow hit him, took what was called the 'coward's blow.'"

The remark was so palpably tossed at Clayborne that there was a little silence in the room and Clayborne was the focus of a curious attention that included Marydel Lee.

"We'll talk about that later," he said lightly. "In the meantime, what do you purpose to do? I have got reports now from all sources. At Santa Clara, Castro has two hundred men; he has got plenty of horses; he can commandeer more; he has cannon. So has General Vallejo. There is a fort at Sausalito, another at Fort Point, two miles from Yerba Buena, all garrisoned and furnished with cannon, powder and shot.

"What have we got? Averaging up, less than twenty rounds apiece for rifles per available man. How far is that going to go in an offensive? One well-aimed bullet for protection is worth a dozen fired in an attack.

"It is suggested that we rise simultaneously. We, in Sonoma, against Vallejo; Hartnell's neighbors against Castro and so on. Rise with scarcely any ammunition against cannon and plenty of powder and lead. The odds are too great for reason. What are you going to do after you have used all the powder and shot you have? Where are you going to get more? Ten minutes' real fighting will exhaust your store.

"Even if there were a warship at Yerba Buena or at Monterey, they would not supply you as irregulars. Fremont himself is hoarding his ammunition, not knowing where he will get more. Unless the government recognizes a state of war with Mexico, where are you going to get it? Fremont can't. He realizes that. That is one reason why he plays the waiting game."

His argument was received with nods by a few, with doubt by the rest. Ide was one of the last.

"I don't believe any American commander would refuse us powder for protection," he said.

Clayborne shrugged his shoulders.

"Try it and see," he said. "If we are openly attacked there will be no question of what we must do—fight! For the present, I say wait. I am going to start for Sutter's Fort and see what Castro's plans are in the Sacramento Valley. I shall try to get in touch with Fremont. The messenger from the States may have arrived."

"He may," sneered Lawton.

Marydel Lee got up, folded the half-finished flag and bade them good night. But she did not go to bed. There was one main living room in Lee's house, used for the council-chamber and at one end of this ran a gallery off which opened bedrooms. This was curtained above its closed-in rail so that any one could pass along it unseen from below. It was reached by an open staircase.

Outside the door to her room she paused, parted the curtains where a rod supported the ring-rail and gazed down into the room. Something in Clayborne's voice when he had set aside Lawton's reference to the "coward's blow" had convinced her that the matter was not ended.

She saw Clayborne get up, excuse himself for a minute and start for the stairs. She darted into her room and heard him pass to his own door, enter, cross the floor of his room, turn and pass out again to the gallery. She waited until he descended the stairs, then ran soft-footed to her observation post. She was sure that Clayborne had gone for his holster pistols, kept in a case when not afield. She saw the mahogany box under his arm with a catch in her breath, hesitating whether to interfere. She knew she was the real cause of any quarrel. But Clayborne's actions mystified her.

The long table was lit by half a dozen tallow candles, thick molded, flaring irregularly as the cord wicks lengthened. Clayborne picked up one of these and set it on a smaller table at the end of the room after placing his case of pistols on the larger stand. Then he turned to Lawton who, with the rest, sat silently watching him.

"You slurred my honor just now, Lawton," he said coldly. "This is no time for any of us to quarrel, much less to disable or kill each other."

Lawton jumped up.

"I'll take the chances of your disabling or killing me," he said. "As for you—coming from who knows where with your

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unasked for advice, your attempt to run our affairs—why the sooner you——"

Lee caught at his elbow and pulled him down, protesting. Clayborne had taken up one of his pistols and cuddled it into his palm. They were already loaded, save for the capping.

"I am going to show you how much chance you would have with me, Lawton," he said. "Then you will know that, when I refuse to fight you, it is because I believe my present business greater than my personal feelings."

While they watched, even Lawton fascinated, Clayborne raised his pistol and fired. The flame of the candle winked as the ball passed through its violet center and buried itself in the outer wall timbers. The tall wick, fairly divided, toppled and its charred top disappeared while the flame sprang up more brightly. Clayborne had snuffed the candle.

"You see how easily I could kill you, Lawton," said Clayborne, his eyes cold as ice, his voice frigid with deadly emphasis. Lawton gulped for speech and found it, somewhat uncertainly.

"The candle was not holding a pistol," he said.

"I have faced pistols before now," replied Clayborne. "And there are those who can tell you that I have killed my man."

He was thinking of his fight with Scipio in the cave when he spoke, and of the testimony that Carson and others might bear. He did not think how it might be misinterpreted. He was a little ashamed of his display. It smacked of bravado but he believed that somewhere in Lawton was a yellow streak. He was disposed to give Lawton an object lesson that would achieve its end. Looking at his rival's face he believed he had succeeded. Ide got up and retrieved the candle, marking with finger-tip the spot where the bullet had entered and noticing the trimmed wick.

"I'd like to handle a pistol like that," he said quietly.

There was a consequence to this incident that Clayborne had not foreseen. It showed the next evening after he had left with Scipio for Sutter's Fort. Lawton took immediate occasion of Clayborne's absence to call. Marydel was working on the new banner. Lawton watched her for a while, then asked for Clayborne. Once introduced he would not leave the subject, for all of Marydel's tact.

"He told us all he'd killed his man," he said. "That's what brought him out West. Fremont's troop was a good hiding place for an evader of justice and he is fairly safe in California."

The girl looked at him steadily

"Why wait until he left to mention that?" she asked.

"I didn't think of it at the time," he answered truly enough.

But the shaft had gone home. Marydel Lee had told Clayborne all her history and, in return, he had been singularly reticent. In her opinion the man who sought a duel, sure of his own superiority of skill, was little better than a murderer—surely a coward. Had Clayborne committed such a crime so ruthlessly that he was under ban? And hesitated to repeat it?

CHAPTER XV

FREMONT RETURNS

THE trip to Sutter's Fort was a risky one. A trip by boat, by reason of tide change and general contrariness of winds, would take too long. Scipio discarded his mule at last and rode a powerful roan loaned him by Mr. Lee. They were advised to keep well away from the river to avoid the deep sloughs that ran far back and meant long détours.

The country was flat though well wooded and, as they advanced beyond the delta of the San Joaquin and Sacramento junction, the tules disappeared and heavy timber, often draped with wild vines, bordered the water. Generally they kept to the wagon road between the settlements. The river ran north and the wide expanse of the Sacramento Valley showed only faint blue ridges to the west and gleams of snow peaks to the east. Three peaks, standing out from the main range, showed like purple pyramids, north and east. These were the California Buttes.

They had just sighted these lonely hills when they met a horseman driving a small herd of horses before him. He seemed disposed to avoid them, riding on to a bench while they passed beneath. But he changed his mind and rode down. It seemed that it was Clayborne's buckskin clothes, to which he clung by habit now, that convinced him they were friends.

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"You'll have to give me pardon," he said. "I took ye for greasers. My name's Ezekiel Merritt. I'm with Fremont's outfit."

"With Fremont!" Clayborne and Scipio stared at him in surprize and excitement. Then Clayborne gave their names and begged for information. It came plentifully.

"Fremont's camped yonder by the Buttes," said Ezekeil Merritt, raw-boned, rugged and gray of eye. I've heard him talk of you—both of you. He'll be glad ter see ye an' mebbe I hadn't better spill too much news. He's had a messenger from the States—a Lootenant Gillespie—an' he's come hotfoot from the Klamath country, fighting through Injuns all the way. Now he's restin' at the Buttes an' chinnin' with the settlers.

"The lootenant's gone ahead to Yerba. They is a warship there, or will be in a day or two, and Fremont's short of powder an' grub. They're holdin' a council of war up thar by the Buttes. Wheat's gettin' ripe an' they want to cut it 'fore it's burned. Injuns are gettin' oneasy an' so's the settlers.

"Castro has his men up this way, making a *rodeo* of all the loose horses. Fremont sent me out to dissuade 'em. We did," he added laconically. "They was takin' 'em to Sonoma to Gen'l Vallejo, but now they're goin' back to the Buttes. This here's a small bunch I found astray. I've only got three men with me an' two prisoners. If yo're goin' to Fremont ye might give me a hand with the ponies."

Clayborne agreed but first put the question that was paramount.

"Are we at war with Mexico?"

Ezekiel Merritt shifted a quid of tobacco in his brown, lean cheek and looked at him with an aggravating twinkle.

"Better you ask Fremont about that. 'Pears like a United States officer wouldn't come —— bent through Mexico with orders to the warships at Mazatlan to send him on his way, under orders to find Fremont wherever he was, jest fer nothing. But Fremont's close-mouthed as a sheddin' snake. 'Pears like Fremont wouldn't start back for nothing—or send the officer to a warship for supplies onless something was forward.

"But whatever he read in the letters this Gillespie brings him, he don't tell me. He jus' gives me orders to round up them cayuses. He may have told Carson but Kit Carson can smile more an' say less, when he feels thet way, than any man between Yerba Buena an' Boston Harbor. Mabbe he'll tell you an' if he does an' you feel so's you can pass it on, for the love of the land tell me, for I don't mind ownin' up to the fac' thet I'm nigh bustin' to know myself."

They rounded up the horses with the two prisoners of Castro's horse guard—it had originally consisted of five but there was a significant lack of mention of the missing three by Merritt—and rode swiftly up the west bank of the river. Toward evening Merritt edged them off from the stream and took especial pains to keep under cover.

"The river's dotted with Indian *ranchcrias* like it had the smallpox," he told them. "No use gettin' mixed up an' losin' the ponies. We need 'em. Soon as we get 'em to Fremont he aims to hand the Injuns a walloping. The river *ranchcrias* are full of men. We hear the hill *ranchcrias* are almost deserted. They's stirring."

Clayborne was inclined to think so. There was logic in Merritt's argument concerning Gillespie. It looked as if Fremont was only waiting for fresh horses and supplies to swoop down on the coast. Meantime he was going to avert the burning of the wheat by teaching the valley Indians a sharp lesson.

At sunset they were opposite the Buttes, Merritt looking for a ford. He rode ahead to see if the way was clear. In a short time he came back to the grove where they waited for him with his face solemn.

"We've to get through to the Buttes tonight," he said. "Those devils have bunched and they're painting their faces black an' stickin' white feathers in their hair ready for mischief. An' we've got to get across before dark for they's a bunch right on the ford an' we've got to swim for it lower down.

"One thing, so long as they're on their jamboree, they won't be looking for us." He turned to the prisoners. "If either of ye let a peep out of yore mouths," he said, "I'll slit 'em."

It was tricky work, for the stream was swift and cold, but they got the herd across at last and then, with the sunset painting the buttes vermilion, raced for Fremont's camp. Clayborne and Scipio were hailed with delight by their late comrades, but

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Clayborne looked in vain for Lajeunesse as he left the mare with Scipio and made his way to Fremont's tent, where the Delawares stood on guard outside. Sagundai and a brave named Swonok nodded to him and he noticed that there were new scalps at their belts.

FREMONT welcomed him warmly. Clayborne spread his reports out and made his summary while the Pathfinder listened in silence.

"The time has come to act, Clayborne," he said at last. "The coming of Gillespie, accredited by the Naval Department, is significant. The letters are necessarily ambiguous as he was liable to capture. But I can say this: President Polk wants California. I am empowered to look out for United States interests and to protect the settlers. Commodore Sloat will sail in a day or so from Mazatlan and try to lose the British squadron, which will undoubtedly follow him, somewhere at sea between there and Honolulu. Then he will come to Monterey. I hope he will raise the flag."

"You *hope?*" asked Clayborne blankly.

"Commodore Sloat is a man who hates to make mistakes," said Fremont. "He is ever citing the errors of Paul Jones through hasty action. He may feel that he can not handle both land and sea. But—" Fremont looked keenly at Clayborne—"if the Stars and Stripes should be already raised when he arrives?"

Clayborne thought he saw light, but said nothing.

"I am short of everything," went on the Pathfinder. "Until Lieutenant Gillespie arrives with supplies from the *Portsmouth* at Sutters' Landing, I can not do much. I have done this much. My resignation from the Army is made out ready to be sent back. When my supplies are in my hands I may resign, release my men and suggest to them that they may volunteer under me in a legion for the protection of California settlers. I do not think I shall have many refusals. Thus I shall not embarrass the government if I fail.

"And I shall not fail, if Captain Montgomery of the *Portsmouth* does not fail me. We will handle these Indian *rancherias* before dawn, burn their lodges, drive them into the hills, whipped. You return to Sonoma! Tell them I am coming as soon as possible.

"I must relieve Sutter of his command at Sutter's Fort. He is with us but he is tainted through his magistracy. I shall not injure his holdings but put Kern in temporary charge. I must settle the Sacramento Valley and protect the crops. But I shall lose no time. I can spare you a little powder.

"If you are forced to attack Vallejo, do so by surprize and entrench yourselves, sending me a messenger. We'll deal them hammer blows and march south to Monterey to join Commodore Sloat's squadron. And we'll chase Castro until we catch him if we have to ride him to the tip of Lower California."

Fremont added some words of praise for Clayborne's work. Then Clayborne asked after Basil and the Pathfinder's face saddened.

"He was tomahawked at Klamath Lake," he said. "It was after we joined Gillespie. There were no Indian signs and, for the second time in all the trip, we set no watch. I went the rounds with my pistols after the rest had gone to sleep.

"Kit woke me, calling to Basil to know 'what was the matter over there?' Then he and Owens, who were sleeping together, cried out 'Indians!' Basil and the half-breed Denny had been killed. It was the sound of the ax driven into Basil's head that awakened Kit. Denny's groans, for they filled him with arrows, told what had happened. The Delawares jumped to cover and Carson and I, with Godey, Stepp and Owens ran to their aid as the Klamaths charged into the open.

"The fires were low but Delaware Crane was jumping about, dodging Indian style, and using his rifle as a club. Crane was down with five arrows in his body, three in his breast. It was quick work. I think it was Stepp's shot that brought down the Indian chief and sent them running. He had a half-ax like Scipio carries, English make, gotten from the Hudson Bay post on the Umpquah, no doubt, and Carson cracked his head like a crab to make sure of him. It was the same chief who had given Gillespie a salmon a few days before and then trailed us."

Fremont's voice had softened and there were tears on his tanned cheeks as he went on.

"There were only fifteen of us who had gone on the back trail to meet Gillespie after his courier had told us of his coming.

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We packed our three dead on mules and started for the main body. The lake was black with canoes, coming from everywhere converging to where the trail reached the shore.

"A loon-call told us we had been seen and we had to wrap our three brave fellows in their blankets and hide them in shallow graves under the laurels. I know few who deserve them better than my brave Delaware and Basil. Swonok and Sagundai begged to avenge them. They could not return to the nation ashamed, they said. And after we had joined with our main party I left them in ambush. They caught up with us soon after we had started.

"Better now," said Swonok. "Very sick before, but better now." And he showed two scalps.

"They would have taken more only they fired too soon as Indians always will without whites to handle them. And we fought all the way back. There is no doubt but what Castro had incited them to annihilate us. Carson and Owens, with a scouting party of ten, ran into them and drove them across the river. When we came up there was a big fight. They were waiting for us in the sage with their arrows fanned out on the ground ready to the hand, but we drove them into the pines with a tally of fourteen killed besides those Carson had already accounted for.

"Next day they nearly got Carson. His rifle snapped as an Indian scout was drawing bow. I fired and missed but Sacramento jumped clear on the Indian and his arrow went wide. Sagundai leaped off his horse and clubbed out his brains. Maxwell and Archambeau ran into an attack and Maxwell proved his rifle out against arrows, setting up the scalp in the trail on an arrow for us to find. Gillespie thought it rough work, but they do not think much of Indian fighting in Washington. Perhaps Gillespie will enlighten them.

"Gillespie, by the way, brought mail for you from the East, Clayborne."

"For me?" Clayborne took the little package in genuine amazement at which Fremont laughed.

"It is addressed to you, plainly enough, is it not? 'John Clayborne Esquire, in charge of Captain Fremont, California.' A somewhat vague address, but, with Lieutenant Gillespie as special courier, quite sufficient. It was handed to him at the Navy Department, he said. You evidently have friends, known in high quarters, who have been keeping close touch on your movements, Clayborne. I did not try to forward it until I was certain of your whereabouts."

BEWILDERED, for he did not recognize the handwriting, Clayborne opened the package.

"There may be some news," he said.

Enclosed in the outer wrapper, made stout for traveling, was a thick envelope and an oval parcel about three inches in length. This was covered in silk that had been padded and carefully sewn. The chirography on the envelope and the seals on the flap brought a flood of hot blood to crimson Clayborne's face. He resented its burning significance as he thrust the package wrapper and its enclosures into the breast pocket of his hunting shirt.

"I find that it is probably private matter, after all, sir," he said to Fremont. "Shall I leave these reports of mine with you?"

"If you please."

Fremont was preoccupied already with the lists. Clayborne made his exit quietly and, mounting the mare, rode slowly up the shoulder of one of the Buttes. Reaching a ledge he turned La Belle Rose loose, knowing she would not stray and, alone, isolated from the busy camp below, took out his letter from Lucille Brandon of Brandon Hall.

The oval parcel came with it. He took his knife point and cut the stitches. The silk fell away and the soft cotton with which it had been padded blew off along the turf, catching here and there, and finally whiffed off the ledge while Clayborne sat staring at a miniature he held in the palm of his hand.

It was the exquisitely painted portrait of a beautiful woman. The artist had imparted a suggestion of warmth to the eyes and tenderness to the lips that the original had lacked to Clayborne. In the old days Lucille Brandon had been passionless and he had thought it virginal.

Now, whether the painter had limned in a special message at the request of his subject or had truly set down what he saw, the face was ardent, beckoning, bewitching. There was as much difference between it and the fiancée Clayborne had known as there is between the globe of a lit and an unlit lamp.

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But it left him cold, judicial, adversely critical. The complexion, white as camellia petals, delicately tinted, the dusky hair so carefully tended and arranged, the dark eyes and curving lips that, for all their curving, were the chair of pride—all was eclipsed by a skin of creamy tan, smooth as that of the Southern heiress, blue eyes, golden hair, mouth made up of two parting rose petals, a straight nose, short and barely inclined to tip-tilt, a firm round chin—all set upon a neck as graceful as a lily stem. He gazed at the features of Lucille but he saw the face of Marydel.

Presently he broke the seals and read the letter in the failing light, page after page of flowing script, filled with news and gossip, redundant with anticipation of his return "to his own country and his own people." The reason for this he found in the opening paragraphs.

Dear John:

I write this with humiliation that is none the less because I have to disclose it to you. But it is not merely my head that tells me this is my duty; my heart prompts me also and hopes that you will understand and forgive.

Without more preamble, know that your name is cleared; your honor, if honor may ever be besmirched, shines fair as ever. There is much shame over the feelings engendered by that unfortunate incident and much determination to make amends when you return.

In which decision I subscribe. It is for you to say how complete shall be my subscription.

We all read with pride of your gallant conduct aboard the burning steamer. The prints were full of it. It was through them we finally traced you to Natchez. But I am getting ahead of things.

Your cousin Philip is dead. He was trying a new horse—a spirited animal that he was warned not to mount—but it seems he had been drinking. The animal threw him and his spine was injured in two places. He lived for a few days though it was known *from the first* he could not recover. I saw him. He was a changed man. He confessed all his misbehavior towards you—that he had marked the cards—and other matters. It was a complete confession, not only to me but to many of those present, of his attempt to blight your life—and mine.

The last two words had been crossed out, though not so thoroughly that they could not be easily read. He read on:

Young Kellogg is most mortified. But Philip has made every reparation possible. He wills you all his property, including Belle Rose, that he redeemed from the mortgagor who, indeed, acted in his name, so you will have the plantation back again.

This letter goes forward through the favor of Senator Woolrich. The lawyers of Mr. Beauvais, who was an executor of your cousin Philip, found a river trader named Bowers who knew of your intent to join Fremont. Senator Woolrich knew of a messenger who was to be sent to overtake the expedition in California and I seized the opportunity. It appears that England is about to claim California as payment of Mexico's great debt to her, and that Mexico will cede it to England in payment, and spite to us. War is imminent. It is said that Fremont and the United States Consul in California, a Mr. Larkin, have secret orders to prevent this cession, but Senator Woolrich, who was most polite and obliging, fears that, in case of any premature and unsuccessful action, both the Consul and Captain Fremont may be discredited by the State Department. I trust you will not be drawn into any filibustering affair.

The lawyers of poor Philip will communicate with you but, slow as they are to act in all inheritance matters, I doubt if they will be in time to take advantage of this Lieutenant Gillespie.

There followed many things more personal, reminiscences of their courtship, flatteries more or less subtle and no allusion to the miniature. Its object was plain. Lucille wanted him to come back to her on the old footing. Yet he knew that his dead cousin had wooed her after he had left; that she had suffered his suit. And she had been quick to throw him off without a word, without an opportunity even to offer her release. The spirit of the letter with its underlining emphases was shallow.

As he sat, the letter in his hand, staring out across the dusk of the valley to the purple western hills, he saw again the scene in front of Belle Rose plantation when she had returned his gifts by the hands of the least among her negro slaves. The old resentment flared up; the old wounds reopened; he was once more the sullen John Clayborne. Even in death his cousin Philip, moved to reparation by superstitious dread of the hereafter, had been unfair. In leaving all to John Clayborne he had wronged the widowed sister who kept house for him and who was thus, with her two young sons, left destitute.

He would not take back Belle Rose. He had lost it through his own follies. The widow should not suffer. It was wiped out with his old life, not to be compared to this. He would earn his own fortune. The face of Marydel came up again and his sullen mood filtered into clarity.

He determined to send a letter back to Lucille Brandon at the earliest opportunity—one of friendly thanks that yet should convince her that the old ways were closed to him. He would tell her of his intention to stay in California. His heart suddenly lightened. Lucille had performed a good office that she had never intended. With

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this letter he could go to Marydel and to her father. He could declare his love, brush away the web of misunderstanding that he knew had gathered, though ever so filmily, between Marydel and himself.

Before the chance came for returning mail he might be able to announce his engagement to Marydel Lee. He did not think the news would much hurt Lucille Brandon, save in her pride, and that deserved humbling.

A BUGLE rang out beneath him, the sound coming faint but clear. There was a movement among the many camp-fires now brightly twinkling, a faint hum of voices, the jingle of harness, the neigh of a horse. It was the mess call. Suddenly he became aware that he had eaten nothing since a scanty lunch at noon —that he was fiendishly hungry. He folded up the letter and wrapped the silk about the miniature before he stowed all away and then rode down the mountain, seeing that the mare was well found before he went among the fires and found Carson and the others of his old mess, lacking poor Basil, who was lying under the laurels amid the pines of Klamath Lake. After the meal, their pipes filled, they talked long and eargerly of the details of the northern trip, of what lay ahead of them.

The Indians, being in war-paint, had brought the morrow's encounter on themselves, backed as they were by Castro's emissaries. The proposed attack on Sonoma would set the ball rolling in earnest. There could be no stopping after that. Success or failure, once Ide had advanced against Vallejo and Fremont had come to his assistance, whether to cover a retreat or press home a victory, they were finally committed. Clayborne, with Carson and the rest, was filled with eagerness. To a man, the voyagers were prepared to volunteer under Fremont whose own resignation would make him a free-lance for the time being.

Clayborne said nothing of the hint that Consul Larkin at Monterey had secret orders that were shared by Fremont from the first. He believed Senator Woolrich to be Lucille Brandon's source of information and he knew that legislator to be close to the President. The news was authentic and it helped to explain matters. Clayborne had always been sure that Fremont cherished ambitions beyond that of a mere explorer—a recorder of geographical, geological and botanical facts. Such ambitions were not necessarily selfish, beyond the fact that Fremont was naturally a leader.

As to his being used as a catspaw, praised for success, discarded for failure, Clayborne did not fear that Fremont would fall into that trap. His caution showed that—his tolerance of Castro's insults at Hawk's Peak, for Clayborne had seen that Fremont deeply resented them and would make Castro pay dearly for them once the opportunity offered; his hesitation to move until he was sure of his path, sure of his supplies from Captain Montgomerey of the *Portsmouth*, all pointed to Fremont's level-headedness. If the ship-of-war sent him supplies it would amount to open government recognition.

Fremont evidently considered the time ripe to strike. Settlers had come in to his camp at the Buttes, said Carson, clamoring for protection. After the first shrewd blows these could be counted on for recruits besides those on Clayborne's lists. Almost four hundred first-class fighting men were on call. The only hitch lay in supplies, not only present but the future, and these must come from American warships in Californian waters.

If there was to be any catspaw in the matter, Clayborne considered, it was to be Ide. He was the opening wedge for Fremont's campaign while Fremont waited the return of Lieutenant Gillespie. Success with Vallejo would be the preliminary placing of the tool that Fremont would drive to its limit with powerful hammer blows. Failure would hurt only Ide and his followers under the bear flag.

The United States would not be embroiled, but Ide could no longer be restrained and Fremont could not be blamed for using an instrument so handy. Clayborne himself was a trifle doubtful of the issue at Sonoma, despite the additional powder from Fremont. The odds were tremendous. But an event was already shaping that merged any question of expediency on Clayborne's part into burning indignation.

The talk ended, Fremont took Clayborne's reports and Clayborne went outside to find Carson and, with Owens, Maxwell and Godey, heard all the details of the Klamath skirmishes.

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Before dawn, Carson, Owens, Godey and Archambeau rode out with Maxwell to the river and came back to report the Indians in the midst of their war ceremonies. The troop, with Fremont at the head, rode directly to the place and drove them into the river, save those killed on the banks. All that day they galloped from *rancheria* to *rancheria*, chasing the scattering Indians escaping as best they could. At evening the whole tribe was in commotion, escaping to the hills, the river dotted with swimmers. It was a good day's work, and Fremont expressed his satisfaction.

"The tribes in the valley are never friendly," he said. They will be on their good behavior now, for fear of another beating."

The next day Clayborne with Scipio started back for Sonoma. Merritt went with them at Fremont's suggestion. As on the incoming, his trip was broken. Midway they met Ide, riding hard with ten men, well armed.

Two hundred Mexicans had been reported on the way to the upper valley to burn the houses and drive off the cattle of the settlers. Ide had learned of Fremont's arrival, so swiftly did news spread among the Americans, alert for rumors, and was on his way to ask for help.

The three joined forces with Ide and Merritt proposed a short cut through a shallow valley. Clayborne suggested scouting on the ridge and took the eastern crest with Merritt on the western. Coming down the swale was a dense cloud with the thud of many hooves on the turf. Clayborne was about to turn back, to gallop down to warn the rest when the dust lifted and he saw, not two hundred horsemen, but two hundred horses driven on by a band little larger than Fremont's. Merritt saw the same thing and both swept down to Ide. Swiftly the little force split and took to the high ground, rushing on to reach the horse guard.

The Mexicans, hindered by the herd in front of them, were surrounded and swiftly surrendered without firing a shot. The victory was ridiculously easy. The officer and his fifty men were disarmed and bound. Four of Ide's men were detailed under Merritt to drive the horses to Fremont's camp, deliver the prisoners and return.

Ide was resolute in determination to proceed to Sonoma and attack the fortress of General Guadalupe Vallejo.

"We can do it," he said. "Fremont suggests it, you say, Clayborne. We'll muster my company and surprize them. We'll capture their stores and entrench until Fremont joins us. The time has passed for waiting. Fremont has struck the first blow and we will strike the second. We'll raise the Flag of the Bear until we can float the Stars and Stripes. And we'll announce the Republic of California, until Washington relieves us of our duty!"

Flushed by success and the news that Fremont was behind them, the little cavalcade rode on, gathering Ide's Company by the way. Thirty men galloped up to Lee's rancho late one afternoon and sprang from their saddles.

AS THEY rode into the courtyard Lee himself came out to meet them, his face haggard. A spent and smoking horse stood by a tethering stake, its flanks bloody with spurring. Clayborne recognized it as Lawton's. Ide, too full of his own enterprise to notice Lee's condition, called out to him.

"You're requisitioned for food and lodging for the company, Lee. Fremont is coming and we're going to open the way for him. Going to give Vallejo a surprize party. Tell Miss Lee to hurry up and finish that flag of ours if it isn't ready. Why, what the ——'s wrong, man?"

Lee's expression had checked him at last.

"Marydel has gone," said Lee. "Carried off by Mexicans. I just this moment got the news."

They leaped from their saddles and followed him into the house, Clayborne leading. On a truckle-bed lay a man, a bloody bandage about his head. Lee pointed at him. His eyes were closed.

"He's ashamed to look us in the face," said Lee. "The —— coward! He's barely scratched! He was out riding with Marydel when three men rode up and one snatched at the bridle of her horse. I havn't been able to get much out of him as yet—too scared to talk. But they got Marydel. Lawton tried to say he fought, but I say he ran way. His wound is a joke. He didn't even try to follow them."

"What were the men like?" demanded Clayborne.

Lee shrugged his shoulders.

"I was just trying to find out," he answered.

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Clayborne took the initiative and strode over to the bed, shaking Lawton by the shoulder.

"Talk, you pup!" he snapped out. "I always knew you were yellow but you can speak."

Lawton groaned and muttered something about his head. He half opened his eyes and closed them again as he saw the ring of hard faces looking down on him. Clayborne was pitiless.

"She called him by his name," he said at last, sullenly. "It sounded like Chavez. He was an officer and the two others soldiers. It was three against one. They would have killed me, and who would have brought the news?"

Clayborne turned to Lee, his eyes blazing.

"He must have been transferred by Castro to Vallejo," he said. "Or he has brought messages. I'll be back."

He ran from the room before they could question him and, as they followed to the door, they saw only the ruddy quarters of La Belle Rose whisking round the gateway of the enclosure, her long tail streaming out like a flame, with Scipio mounting in hot haste to follow him. Then the pounding of hoofs.

They pressed about Lee while he told them of Chavez. Lawton was forgotten and turned his face to the wall.

"We'll scour the countryside," said Ide, his stern, Cromwellian face working. "We'll find her, Lee, and bring her back to you."

"Bring her back?" he answered. "Do you think I'll stay behind?"

"Some one has to," said Ide. "Unless you are figuring on Lawton."

Lee turned toward the bed with sudden virulence.

"I wouldn't give him kennel-room," he cried. "He'll leave before we do."

Clayborne galloped hard to the little town of Sonoma, formulating plans as he rode, almost unconscious of Scipio pounding along behind, his mount hopelessly inferior in speed to the mare. Clayborne's thoughts ran riot and he had hard work to control them to any sequence—to any definite summing of the situation.

The sun sank and, with the swiftly thickening dusk, his rage and apprehension increased. Pictures of Marydel in the clasp of Chavez, or a mock for the sensuous officers of Vallejo's garrison, whose reputation for loose gallantries was notorious, maddened him and he ground his teeth and cursed aloud at his own impotence.

That she would defend her honor to the last moment was a foregone conclusion, but there was little hope that they would treat her with respect. Chavez would announce her as a prize of war—a messenger who had openly aided and abetted Fremont.

The *pueblo* of Sonoma was on level ground between hills. From the summit of a rise Clayborne saw the lights twinkling in the place and reined in La Belle Rose. There were not many houses. Most of them centered on the plaza. All were occupied by Mexicans. The residence of General Guadalupe Vallejo was by far the most important— a pretentious two-story structure, plastered over its adobe, red tiled, looped and shuttered and loop-holed like a fortress, its garden surrounded by high adobe walls, guarded by heavily timbered gates. At this time of the evening there would be members of the general's staff in the garden, sentries at the gate.

Clayborne sat silent on the mare, wheeling her swiftly as Scipio came up on his laboring horse.

"You forgot yo' hat, Misteh Clayborne," said Scipio, "an' you forgot me. What you aimin' to do?"

"Find out whether Chavez has brought her to Sonoma."

"How, Misteh Clayborne?"

"I don't know yet. If he has I fancy he'll have taken her to Vallejo's. He'll pretend he's taking her back to Castro as a prisoner," he added, more to himself than Scipio.

"They ain't any moon," said Scipio. "Kind of shady down in the town. S'spose you an' me goes scoutin'. Mebbe we can find some one who's been hangin' about. That's 'bout all these loafin' greasers do, anyway. Likely one of 'em seen 'em. Mebbe we could jus' natcherly 'suade him to tell us."

CLAYBORNE had no better idea and so they rode down to the *pueblo*, keeping away from its one street until they passed the back of the Mission San Francisco Solano, a place used as hospital and convalescent home by the *padres* who had supplanted the Jesuit order. They left the horse in a clump of oaks and stole along the side of the T-shaped building toward the street. Lights showed faintly

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in the windows of the chapel and the sound of an organ came to them. They halted and listened to the tones of a priest giving the benediction.

"We might get some one as they come out," suggested Clayborne. "A straggler. Come on!" It seemed likely that almost any inhabitant would have seen or heard of the arrival of Chavez with the girl. As things were, there was no special reason for him to cover it. The deed once committed he would be careless about further consequences.

Dimly, aside from his prime anxiety for Marydel, Clayborne realized that Ide's attack would barely offset Vallejo's intention to begin the driving of the settlers from the country according to the threat of the *banda*. It was surely some decision of this kind, known to Chavez, that had made him so bold.

To their disappointment the scanty audience, mostly Indians, came out in a crowd, going away in pairs, one group lingering and then following the rest.

"Mebbe the priest'll come this way," whispered Scipio. "If they's any doin's up to the gen'l's, he'll likely be in it. An' they ain't no one knows mo' than a priest 'bout what's goin' on."

Clayborne pressed Scipio's arm for the sound advice. They stepped into the soft dust of the street and took up their station in the deep portal. The doors were wide and high and only a hinged portion of the whole was used for the ill attended vespers. This was open and they could see an acolyte putting out the candles by the altar.

They waited in the shadow. No one passed down the deserted street. Then shuffling footsteps sounded. It was dark inside the church now. A tall figure stepped through the opening, followed by another. The first was muffled in a *serape* that gave out an unmistakable odor. Also no one but an Indian would wear a blanket in such weather. Scipio glided out and tackled him as Clayborne caught the arm of the second man by a wide, rough textured sleeve.

"What is it, my son?" asked an amazed voice in Spanish. Then the *padre* strove to loosen Clayborne's restraining clutch for the Indian had unleashed a fierce quality of fighting and he and Scipio were hard at it.

"I want you to answer some questions, father," answered Clayborne. "I do not intend you any harm—provided I get the information. But if you call out I shall be obliged to use force."

"I am a man of peace, my son. What is your will?"

There came a grunt from Scipio. He had swathed the Indian in his own blanket and had gripped his throat under the folds so fiercely that the man collapsed.

"Is there any one in the chapel?" demanded Clayborne. "Do not lie to me."

"No one, my son."

"Pick him up and bring him inside!" Clayborne ordered Scipio. The black lifted the limp figure easily and followed into the black interior.

"This way, my son," said the *padre* gently. "We'll go into the sacristy." Clayborne kept hold of him as he piloted the way down an aisle between the rows of chairs, turning aside at the altar and opening a door. Up two steps they arrived in a small room lit by a window that showed gray in the wall. The chapel formed a projection to the main building, and the window looked out upon the mission garden.

"I will get a light, my son," said the priest mildly. He made a step forward, and his robe came slack in Clayborne's grasp. The too complaisant priest had slipped out of it. Clayborne lunged forward as he heard the click of a latch. Then a sudden exclamation.

"I've got him!" said Scipio. "Keep quiet! I ain't goin' to huht you none."

Five minutes later Clayborne and Scipio stole out of the church, leaving a disgruntled *padre* and an astounded Indian bound and gagged on the floor of the sacristy. The priest had told all he knew under threat of being taken to the camp of the Americans and treated to a less considerate inquisition.

As Scipio had guessed, he had been on his way to the house of General Vallejo. Chavez had been there, he said, having brought despatches from Castro, despatches that gave orders for a compulsory driving out of all the settlers, destruction of their houses, seizure of their crops and, if necessary, the taking of their lives.

Vallejo had eight field-pieces and two hundred stands of arms, over a hundred men and many horses. The drive on the Americans was to take place the next day. This was to be followed by a junction with Castro. Fremont's coming had precipitated the action though they had not learned of

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his defeat of their Indian allies. He thought Chavez was with the general. But of the girl the *padre* swore he knew nothing.

As they raced back to Lee's with their news, Clayborne realized that his personal ends might not be achieved in the line of duty. But that duty was plain and he felt sure that the odds were in favor of Chavez taking the girl to Vallejo's. Ide's attack must not be delayed. It must take place at once. And he determined to be the first to enter the courtyard.

He found Ide and some of his men returned, and presently the rest came straggling back—Lee last of all. He had to tell his story a dozen times. It was two in the morning before they had all assembled, and an hour later before they started for the *pueblo*, a grim and desperate company, thirty-four all told, on horses none too fresh, riding silently through the night toward sleeping Sonoma.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ATTACK

THE little cavalcade halted on the top of a hillock in a clearing among the live oaks for final recapitulation of their plans. To some of the thirty-four the desperate nature of their undertaking had brought a certain solemnity. None suggested compromise or withdrawal. The assurance that Vallejo would attack in the morning, unless they prevented him, cemented the enterprise, but the task in hand increased by reflection.

Ide's enthusiasm, Lee's sorrowing rancor and the white rage of Clayborne kept them from contemplating the affair as a forlorn hope. At Vallejo's house, half *hacienda*, half fortress, they trusted to find the majority of the officers, although many of them were quartered in the little town as were the soldiers. Storming the house, they would be likely to be caught between two fires unless they worked swiftly and successfully.

In their favor lay the fact that the attack would be unexpected, that the hour would find the Mexicans asleep and close to the lowest tide of their vitality in the hour before dawn, fuddled more or less with liquor.

As they rode out of the oaks a thin, faint light appeared in the east; pale, rather a difference in darkness than an actual suggestion of coming light. But it prefaced dawn. Trees began to separate from clumps into individual objects, houses bulked black and a cock crew when they entered the outskirts of Sonoma.

Vallejo's *hacienda* lay dark, the great gates closed. Clayborne rode La Belle Rose close to the walls, Scipio with him. Both stood on their saddles and from there clambered to the tiled ridge of the broad wall. Out of the scented garden came the snores of drunken sentries. In the graying light faint glints showed from the brass field-pieces, two trained to command the gate, the rest parked in readiness for the morrow's raid—for that day's raid upon the settlers.

Clayborne called down softly, and six more men followed his example, their horses being held by the previously appointed guard. One by one the eight of them dropped into the close, flung themselves upon the sleeping sentries and threw open the gates.

Some one bungled and a shot was fired before the gates were well aback. Lights showed in the house and shutters were flung open as the little band of Americans worked fast in their appointed tasks. The stout bars that had held together the gates were used as battering rams for the front door. Two howitzers were hastily taken through the gateway with their rammers, primers, powder and canister.

A bugle rang out shrilly from an upper window and bullets began to hum and whine. The Americans closely hugged the walls of the *hacienda*, pounding at the splintering oak panels, or awaited the inevitable reinforcements from the Mexicans quartered in the town, protected from the fire by the thick walls.

Lee, desperate at the loss of his daughter, thrust his way through the gap as one side of the door fell backward, the lock smashed, the lower hinge gone. Ide and Clayborne were beside him and Ide caught Lee as a bullet hit him just above the armpit. Next moment the rest of the door fell with a thundering crash.

The eastern sky was flushing now but the great entry hall was gloomy and from a gallery reached by a great staircase, came the flashes of the defenders' pistols, fired at the plainly silhouetted figures of the Americans as they leaped in across the demolished door.

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From outside there came the roar of a howitzer followed by a yell of triumph. The soldiers from the town had fled, demoralized by the scattering canister, believing the fortress already in the hands of the gringos.

The dim light in the hall brightened swiftly and, their eyes adjusted to the change, Clayborne at their head, Scipio beside him, they charged for the stairway. The Mexicans, half-dressed, thronged the treads to meet them. General Vallejo stood at the stairhead, calling to his men who still poured on to the gallery from a wide passage back of it. Colonel Vallejo and Pruden, sword in hand, awaited the break of the assault with seeming confidence. The hall echoed with the excited oaths of the Mexicans, the rallying cries of the Americans; the air was sour with the reek of discharged powder.

Looking in vain for Chavez, Clayborne fired a pistol at a Mexican officer who was aiming deliberately at Ide, and standing in the middle of the floor called up half a dozen men released from their duty at the gate by the speedy flight of the enemy before the howitzer. The man fell, toppling headlong down the stairs, a sword, attached to his wrist by its thong, clattering after.

Clayborne stooped and secured the weapon and, intent upon the finding of Chavez and the rescue of Marydel, rushed for the stairs. He had no especial skill at swordplay and found himself opposed by the supple, darting steel of Colonel Pruden, setting easily aside his desperate lunges, threatening from the vantage of superior height to run him through, until Scipio plucked at the officer's ankle and yanked him from his foothold, pinning him indignant and groaning against the angle of the treads, snatching away his sword and joining Clayborne to hew a way up the stairs.

The Mexicans retreated before the stern attack, fighting their way backward down the wide passage that traversed the house from front to rear, or, fearful of the unerring fire of the Americans, throwing down their arms as the gringos crowded in.

Ide grappled General Vallejo and the latter surrendered. Pruden was already prisoner and Colonel Vallejo, cursing but helpless, threatened by half a dozen muzzles, gave up his sword.

At the end of the long passage a high window opened to a gallery. Through the casement the Mexicans tumbled, streaming down an outer stairway to the stables, chased by four or five of Ide's men. Two or three of them made a rally while others secured horses and more than a score of them broke clear, riding without saddles, without arms, scantily dressed, fleeing south to San Rafael.

The victory was won before the sun had fairly cleared the hills. In the courtyard Ide assembled the two Vallejos, Pruden and eighteen other prisoners. There were wounds and slashes, but the Americans had lost no lives. Ide began to count his men and make preparations for defense. He had to hold out now until Fremont came and to Fremont he intended sending immediate tidings of his success.

MEANWHILE Clayborne raged from room to room of the house, seeking for Marydel and her abductor. Scipio took one side of the passage, on which doors opened right and left, Clayborne the other. He found one entrance locked and set his shoulder to it, regardless of shrill clamor from inside. He found an elderly woman, bundled in a dressing gown, huddled up in bed who pointed a finger at him across the counterpane and flung fluently her definition of a gringo *bandolero*. She mocked his questions as to Marydel, until he threatened her with the point of his sword.

"*Madre de Dios!*" she exclaimed. "Would you murder me? Are all the gringos slayers of women?"

"I'll answer you with this," said Clayborne grimly, pricking her, "unless you answer me. Who are you? Quickly!"

"Housekeeper to the general."

"You know Lieutenant Chavez who brought messages from General Castro?"

Cringing from contact with the blade, she nodded.

"He returned here last night with an American girl?"

She put up her trembling hands to ward off Clayborne's sword and gasped a "*sí!*"

"Ah! Now then!"

At the look on Clayborne's face who almost feared to put the next necessary question, the housekeeper broke into voluble protestations.

"*Señor*, it is true! But, for the love of the saints, harm me not! For she is safe. Pure as when she entered. Take away that

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sword. Look you, General Vallejo is no ravisher; he is a *hidalgo*. When this Chavez entered, saying the girl was his prisoner, that she had betrayed Castro to Fremont, she, trusting the nobility of the general, cast herself upon his protection. And the general placed her under mine. Chavez was furious. He threatened, and the general laughed at him. 'I do not war on women,' said General Vallejo, 'and I am in command,' so ——"

"Where is she?" thundered Clayborne. The woman pointed to a door beside her bed.

"It leads to a gallery and the north wing. It is the door at the end. Here is the key."

Before she had finished speaking Clayborne was in the passage. It was full day. The hubbub from the outer courtyard came faintly up to him as he fitted the key to the lock, calling:

"Marydel! Marydel! It is John!"

The door gave and he entered, alarmed at the silence. The bed-clothes from a great four-poster were scattered across the floor; a chair was overturned. Across the chamber another door stood partly open and Clayborne could hear a scuffling sound, a muffled cry and then, as he leaped through the entrance sword in hand, the hoarse, panting ejaculations of a man.

"You daughter of the devil! I'll have my will with you if I die for it!"

The room was shuttered but the sunrise streamed in through chinks and through loopholes designed for defense. Amid a clutter of overturned furniture Marydel Lee was fighting for her honor in the clutch of Chavez. She was fully dressed but one sleeve had been torn loose from her white arm and the upper portion of her gown was in sad disorder.

She fought desperately, her golden hair streaming down her back, one hand against Chavez' leering face that bore red testimony of her defense, but she was plainly at the end of her strength. The man's brute strength was crushing the breath from her, bending her backward in a mad wrestle. As Clayborne entered Chavez lifted her from the floor while her fingers clawed at him.

Chavez, turning with his burden toward the outer chamber, stared like a baffled devil at Clayborne, interposing the girl as a shield between him and Clayborne's sword. Then he fairly flung her at the latter, springing back to where his own weapon lay sheathed upon a wooden settle. Marydel's eyes opened wildly, then her arms clung about Clayborne's neck.

"I prayed that you would come," she gasped. Chavez had his blade out and was coming with a rush, seeking to take Clayborne while the girl still hampered him. But she sensed his plan in Clayborne's eyes and disengaged herself in time for Clayborne to parry the furious lunge of the Mexican, while he set the girl behind him with his left arm.

"Run, Marydel," he said. "We hold the house."

She may have not heard him; she may have been fascinated with the fight, eager to see her lover punish, kill, her would-be despoiler. She did not think he needed help, nor consider that Chavez was the better trained to the use of his weapon, so confident was she of the outcome. She stood in the doorway between the two rooms, a hand on either side, still weak from effort and the revulsion of despair, watching the furious combat, listening to the grate of steel on steel.

The sword that Clayborne had captured was a far lighter weapon than the cavalry saber Chavez wielded. It was practically a rapier, an heirloom of Toledo steel, or it would have been smashed by the fierce cuts of the Mexican's attack. Only Clayborne's agility saved him a dozen times as they fought stamping about the room in the uncertain light—that and the wild ferocity with which Chavez endeavored to cleave him down.

The Mexican fought with the knowledge of certain death before him, either from Clayborne or his comrades. He cursed his own folly in capturing the girl, the chivalry of Vallejo that had defeated his immediate ends, his own mad passion that had delayed him; and he cursed the stubborn, subtle defense that Clayborne maintained, sidestepping swinging cuts and parrying thrusts with a wrist hardened by months of trail-travel and sound diet.

Chavez' wind was none too good. Marydel had put up a stubborn fight. He had drunk heavily the night before in sullen displeasure of Vallejo's separating him from his prize. He had located the girl's whereabouts and the surprize had given him the opportunity of getting to the north wing,

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forcing a lock and meeting Marydel herself trying to slip down to her countrymen.

His breath began to whistle as he swung the heavy saber and his arm began to tire. He gave ground, forced to the defensive, baffled by the swift lunges of Clayborne coming from unexpected angles in defiance of all the canons of fence, but inexorable. He essayed a whirling *moulinet* in sheer desperation, set a foot within the rungs of an upturned chair and went down with three inches of Clayborne's steel in his throat, severing the jugular.

OUTSIDE and below the Americans were cheering as Clayborne and the girl hurried back to the main passage. The housekeeper was still on her bed, her head covered, a shapeless heap beneath the clothes. They emerged on the corridor and turned toward the railing of the gallery and the stairs. Suddenly Scipio backed out of a room, one arm, his right, hanging helpless, defending himself clumsily with his sword in his left hand against three Mexicans whom he had surprized in a drunken, sodden slumber, one of whom had shot him after they had surrendered.

The hall below was clear. Victors and prisoners were in the courtyard and Scipio was pressed back against the railing. His assailants had fired their only pistol and were armed with knives. His breath still laboring, Clayborne sprang to the rescue of the black. His sword took a Mexican in the shoulder as the man raised his arm for a stab and the point squeaked against the bone.

Scipio dodged under the slash of a second, with the third clinging to his sword arm, and butted his man in the stomach. The three went down in a heap, Scipio undermost. Clayborne slashed the wrist of the third Mexican as his arm snaked up for the fatal blow. Then the man he had first wounded struck fiercely at the back of his knees and he was joined to the writhing heap.

The gallery railing, already weakened in the general fight, gave way. There was a shriek from Marydel and Clayborne felt himself falling in a sprawl of limbs and bodies to the hall below. He landed on his shoulders, his head striking the planks with the weight of at least two of the others upon him, just as there was a rush of Americans through the door, alarmed at the cry of Marydel.

CHAPTER XVII

THE STARS AND STRIPES

THE Republic of California was now announced, if not established, and the Bear Flag flew above the fortress of General Vallejo. He, with his two colonels, had been sent under armed escort to Fremont who had imprisoned them at Sutter's Fort and, during the absence of the guard of ten, the score left to defend the fortress were hard put to it to throw up sufficient defenses.

Despite the cannon and big supplies of canister, grape and ball, only a hundred pounds of powder had been captured with the *hacienda*. A request to Captain Montgomery of the *Portsmouth* resulted in a courteous refusal, delivered in person by the executive officer of the man-of-war. Ammunition could not be given any merely "popular party" from government stores, but the general good-will and congratulations of the commander were evident.

Every day saw their position more difficult. They repulsed an attack by seventy Mexicans, killing one, wounding four and rescuing two Americans who were being taken to Castro. From these they learned of strenuous preparations to stamp out the new republic. A company was gathering at San Rafael under the command of a Captain de Torre, to be reinforced by troops mustering under Castro for the passage across the bay.

But the Bear Flag still flew, and Fremont had sent word that he was coming. So they hoarded every grain of powder, heightened their breastworks and prepared to sell their lives dearly, thirty men against the Mexican-Californian government. At any moment the British squadron might arrive to take possession and then they, as rebels, would be likely to have short shift.

Clayborne, with a strained wrist and a neck still stiff from his fall, was too busy for much private speculation. With La Belle Rose he volunteered for the dangerous scouting duty. Scipio's arm was mending. Lee's wound was progressing favorably.

But something had gone wrong between Clayborne and Marydel. He had heard from Scipio that the girl had rushed down the stairway and taken his head into her lap with every appearance of grief and affection, but now she treated him with a crisp manner that left no opportunity for a

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demanded explanation, but set up an effectual barrier between the present and their old-time intimacy. Ministering to her father, she avoided him. Her eyes had changed. They seemed to regard him beneath a film of ice and her interest in him appeared so casual that Clayborne, in a rage at the ways of women, left her severely alone.

Scipio, too, wondered at the change.

"I wondeh if she's goin' to git biggity, too?" he asked himself. "Wise woman say the Lord make no two things alike, leaves on the tree, or fish in the sea. Certain no two women alike. Certain no one woman alike for two days togetheh."

Clayborne scoured the shore region looking for the flotilla that would announce the coming of Castro's force and a general attack. How they could hold out against it, none paused to consider. Ide's hair grew gray in those anxious days. Rumors came in every hour. Half an hour's steady fighting would see the end of their powder. If the enemy guessed their condition no valor could avail them.

Riding along the bluff above Bodega Bay, Clayborne saw three buzzards rise heavily from the ground, gorged. They flapped out of trees and he rode over, expecting to find the carcass of a cow. The day was hot and flies buzzed angrily in little clouds above two ghastly objects tied to trees.

La Belle Rose objected strenuously to a near approach and Clayborne finally dismounted. The remains of two men, stripped to the skin, horribly butchered with knives, proclaimed Mexican cruelty. They had not been scalped. They were frightfully mutilated but not beyond all recognition as white men. And one distorted, leaden face was gruesomely familiar. It was that of Lawton.

As Clayborne gazed, a dozen horsemen emerged from a grove a short distance away and immediately divided, galloping hard to cut him off, yelling and brandishing their sabers. Gaily uniformed, they were evidently part of Torre's cavalry—perhaps the very men who had butchered the two settlers.

Clayborne ran to the mare, vaulted to her saddle and put her to top speed, riding along the line of shore while six of the cavalrymen stretched out at top speed to intercept him.

Lying low in the saddle, leaning forward on the mare's neck, Clayborne saw with satisfaction that he would come within pistol shot of the two foremost. His holster pistols were loaded and he was confident of the results of a duel. It was his left wrist that had been sprained and he did not need reins for La Belle Rose. The gap closed. The leading Mexican spurred his mount directly into Clayborne's path, shouting to his companions, one of whom was close up.

Clayborne rode the mare straight at his opponent, who fired hastily and missed. The mare's shoulder cannoned against the withers of the other horse and Clayborne deliberately shot the Mexican through the head. Then he wheeled, emptying his other holster. The next man was pulling on the curb, not relishing the turn of events.

It was one thing to chase a lone horseman, another to meet a buckskin clad fighter whose aim was super-excellent. Clayborne fired and the cavalryman toppled from the saddle, a foot caught in the hooded stirrup as his horse bolted back, dragging him toward the rest of the troop. Clayborne called to La Belle Rose who sped away for Sonoma, swift as a swallow in her skimming flight, her rider exultant at his prompt avenging.

He did not care to tell Marydel of Lawton's death but informed Ide, who broke the news. He caught sight of Marydel weeping and wondered if she had loved the dead man, after all.

THE same evening Fremont came, his Delawares about him, his voyagers supplemented by settlers from the Sacramento Valley, riding in a hollow square about the pack horses and subsistence cattle. There were a hundred and sixty of them all told—the voyagers debonair, the settlers grim, entering the entrenchments among cheers and waving sombreros.

Clayborne reported immediately. When he reached the story of the two Americans, Sagundai and Swonok quietly left camp with four of the Delawares. His recital excited the newcomers to the desire of immediate reprisal. But the men had ridden fast and far and the mounts were weary.

Carson and Owens and Godey, tireless ever, changed to fresh horses and went out with Clayborne to scout. A few miles from camp Carson and Clayborne met the Delawares returning triumphant. Swonok

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and Sagundai each boasted a scalp. They had intercepted two messengers bearing letters from Castro to Torre. These "paper-talks" the Indians had secured. They gave the names of the couriers as Bereyasa and de Haro and the important news that de Torre was ordered to send horses to Point San Pablo to meet the troops of Castro.

Fremont lost no time, once an objective was discovered that was definite. A troop of a hundred took the field to San Rafael only to find Torre in swift retreat toward Sausalito, a small harborage across from Yerba Buena. Fremont, with a hundred men back of him, was too much for de Torre's nerves. He commandeered the launch of an American named Richardson and was well out on the Bay before the advance riders of Fremont reached the Sausalito cliffs.

There was a vessel there at anchor, the *Moscow*, owned and commanded by Captain William D. Phelps of Worcester, Massachusetts, dealer in hides and tallow. The New England twang of the skipper sounded strangely welcome to the voyagers.

"I tell ye, I'm glad to meet up with ye, Captain Fremont. An' I reckon anything I can do to help ye is granted afore asked for. Me an' my men air Yankees and Americans born an' bred. Help yourse'f an' we'll help ye do it."

"I want to get across the Bay and capture the guns at Fort Point, near Yerba Buena," said Fremont. "They've got fourteen long, brass Spanish pieces there. I intend to spike them. I'm working south to Monterey, captain, sweeping up as I go until we catch General Castro."

"I'm with ye," said the skipper, "far as I can. I don't believe you'll catch Castro short of Los Angeles, naow he's started. He don't like the way your men shoot. I'll furnish ye with a boat or two and a crew which'll include myself. Thet's the only bargain I make. I go along."

Fremont picked twelve of his best shots. These included Carson, Owens, Godey, Maxwell and Clayborne. They started before daylight in a fog that held all the way across the straits but did not annoy the Yankee skipper who steered, he said, "by smell and feel and horse sense." The tide was flooding and they headed well up, the Yankee sailors rowing lustily in high glee at the expedition.

As the sun rose the fog lifted and a wind blew in through the Gate, showing the low cliffs at Fort Point. The men bent to the oars and they landed on the strip of sand, scrambling up the steep bank in time to see several horsemen riding at full speed toward Yerba Buena. The Fort was won without the exchange of a shot and the guns spiked with rat-tail files brought from the ship for the purpose. From Sutter's Fort to the sea, the land north of the Bay was freed from Mexican authority.

A garrison was left at the Mission San Rafael on the return to Sonoma. It was the Fourth of July when they reached the camp at last, and Fremont pointed out to Clayborne the Bear Flag.

"It will serve," he said. "Though today should better have seen the Stars and Stripes afloat. As it is we will celebrate as Americans."

There were salutes and speeches, the appointment of Fremont as provisional governor and in the evening, a ball. Fremont opened it with Marydel Lee as his partner and, when he returned her to her seat, Clayborne approached.

"You will dance with me?" he asked.

She surveyed him gravely.

"I do not care to dance again," she answered.

It mended matters little for Clayborne to notice that she kept her word despite all protests. In the end he summoned courage.

"Something has come between us, Marydel," he said. "Will you not tell me what it is?"

He held her gaze. Though her look was cool her cheeks began to burn and at last her eyes changed dark with anger.

"It is nothing I care to discuss with you, Mr. Clayborne," she said. "And my name, except to my closest friends, is Miss Lee."

Clayborne's temper mastered him. The insult seemed gratuitous.

"I am glad to be told my standing in your regard," he said stiffly. "I shall no longer intrude. I beg your pardon for doing so."

He turned away abruptly and left the place. Were all women cold or fickle? he asked himself. Was Marydel the type that smiled only long enough to prove her powers of attraction? Poor Basil Lajeunesse had warned him to beware of women. For the second time he had been lured. The miniature of Lucille Brandon was at his quarters. He took it out with a half-formed idea of

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writing her that he was coming back to take up the old life. So far he had had neither time nor opportunity of sending it. Under his cousin's will he could resume his place, marry Lucille.

He looked long at the portrait then laid it down to gather writing materials. The miniature was framed in jet in which pearls had been inlaid. It was backed with the clean side of the ivory on which it had been painted. Clayborne noted an inscription there for the first time, written in Lucille's distinctive script.

Faithfully,
LUCILLE BRANDON.

"Faithfully?" The term was a rare satire.

"No woman shall spoil or share my life," he said under his breath and thrust the miniature deep into his haversack. He did not answer his letters. He was in no mood for anything but a long gallop on La Belle Rose. The steady swing under the silent stars calmed him and, when he returned long after the ball had ended, he stroked the mare's velvet muzzle while she whickered softly.

"You, at least, are faithful, *ma belle*," he said. "More faithful than any woman."

Nor did he dream that Marydel lay wide awake, looking into the darkness with eyes that welled over with bitter tears.

He was glad to plunge into the preparations for the crossing on the American Fork whence they were to swoop down on Castro. Fifty men were left in garrison at Sonoma, the field-pieces divided and a swift march made. Henceforth, Clayborne decided, he would be a soldier under Fremont. Later, when California was conquered, he would take up plans for the future. Fremont, he knew, expected to be made governor-in-fact for his services and he had hinted strongly that he might place heavy reliance upon Clayborne in the administration of the new territory.

ON THE evening of the tenth of July an express messenger came riding in from Captain Montgomery. Fremont read the message by the light of the fire and crushed it in his hand, showing strong emotion. He mastered his voice with evident effort and spoke to Clayborne, Carson and the rest of the officers' mess, his tones eloquent with repressed triumph.

"Comrades, we are now upon American soil. With your help and by the grace of God, we shall keep it. The Stars and Stripes fly at Monterey and Yerba Buena. A flag has been sent to Sonoma for the same purpose. We are requested to raise it at Sutter's Fort. It shall be done at sunrise. And the British fleet has not been sighted."

As the sun lifted, the field-pieces barked out a salute of twenty-one guns. The red stripes, and the white stars floating on the blue, fluttered up the halyards of the fort's flagstaff and streamed to the wind. Four flags greeted the sun that morning, symbol of Democracy in California.

"I was afraid Sloat would temporize, Clayborne," said Fremont. "But the work we have done north of the Bay has forced his hand. Now to pay our respects to Castro."

But Castro did not wait. He had already evacuated Santa Clara and was falling back with his howitzers and cattle on San Juan before the swift march of Fremont's band of mounted rifles. The Americans had vessels at San Diego and at Santa Barbara as well as Monterey and Yerba Buena. Marines had landed. The combination was too much for the Mexican general. The war was on, and he fled fast toward Los Angeles.

Clayborne's spirits were high as the cavalcade passed Hawk's Peak with a marching salute and entered Monterey. From the hills above the crescent bay they saw four American men-of-war at anchor and, beside them, the red flag of Saint George limp at its mast head, the British *Collingwood* of eighty guns, flagship of Sir Admiral Seymour, tricked by a false cruise of Sloat toward the South Seas into a fatal delay.

"There are the pieces on the chessboard," said Fremont. "We have four pieces to one, Clayborne, but that eighty-gun warship of England is a queen. Our little ships are pawns, like this command of mine. And, like a pawn, I have been pushed forward to the front at the beginning of the game."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE END OF THE TRAIL

CLAYBORNE rode into the cañon at noon, mounted on La Belle Rose, alone. Scipio had found a wife at Santa Barbara and settled down to ranching in

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the new land. The war was over. And with its close had come only disappointment. He had long ago sent back the miniature and letters severing all connection with the land beyond the "Big Blue."

But the promise of California had not materialized with him. Fremont, quarreling with General Kearney, taking orders only from Commodore Stockton who had relieved Sloat and organized the California Battalion of four hundred, had conquered the country but lost his governorship, going back to Washington to face a court martial and, resenting a presidential reversal of its findings, resigned from the service. Now he was returning from his fourth expedition, misled by false guides, still resolute to complete the pathway for the railroad from coast to coast.

The yellow grains that Owens had found in the American Fork had turned out to be true gold. Six months before Marshall had found colors in Sutter's mill race near Coloma and now the swarms of Argonauts were coming fast from all the seven seas.

The bed of the river that once wound silver through the cañon was now muddy; the game had fled from the hills and red-shirted men sweated as they labored on the bars, sluicing the flumes, gathering the precious grains and nuggets, sped to the work with but one thought—the gathering of gold, spending it recklessly when gained, quarreling, often killing over the disputes for claims.

It was a sordid employ, Clayborne thought, though the fever for it was already in his veins. It was the use the gold was put to that purified it, and he meant to secure enough of it to stock a big acreage in the San Joaquin Valley with cattle, to lead the free life of a ranger.

He acknowledged his own bitterness as he rode on down to the collection of crude shacks and tents that made up the camp. He had lost what he most wanted, the sweet dream of a wife-mate, of children growing up to be the inheritors of this fair land when the first rude upheavals of its early progress had settled down. Life had been a good deal of a failure, after all. He had few friends, no intimates. He was sterner, harder, not inclined to invite the advances of his fellows.

A hubbub broke out on a sand-bar just beneath the bank and he halted looking on without especial interest. A group of figures surrounded one man, a scarlet-shirted giant, hip-booted, his face hidden under his wide-rimmed hat, who had just surged through the shallows into their midst. The bellow of his deep voice came distinctly.

"Jump my claim, will ye? You dirty set of robbers. Jump my claim when I go off for a day's prospecting! I'll teach ye to respect a man's property! You thieving skunks! Git! My pants is made of b'ar-hide and my belt comes off the backbone of a catamount. I'm furred like a b'ar an' my name is B'arcat Bowers. Git!"

Clayborne jumped from the mare and plunged down the bank. His pistols were in his hands. His blood raced through his veins. Bowers! And Bowers in trouble! For he caught the gleam of guns and the flash of a knife.

A shot rang out and one man fell on the gravel at the explosion of the Bearcat's gun. The man with the knife jumped for him as Clayborne leveled his pistol and the bullet spanged fairly against the steel. He shouted as he crunched along the gravel and the claim-jumpers, startled at the sudden reinforcements, alarmed at the downing of one of them and the resolute attitude of Bowers who had cracked another over the wrist and knocked his gun out of his hand, stood irresolute.

Bowers caught sight of him and let out a stentorian whoop that echoed down the cañon and made the miners, too busy over their own work to interfere in the affairs of another, turn and stare.

"Clayborne! Come on, old-timer! Give 'em a touch of Fremont's style. Look at the derned skunks! Look at 'em skitter off! Though they could have had the claim for all I cared. I've made a real strike. Up a crick a ways from here. Twenty dollars to the pan. It's whar most of the gold on these bars comes from, an' they ain't had sense to look for it.

"That was Susy J.'s idea," he confessed as they waded ashore and up to the bank. "She figgered it out. 'Let 'em grub for what's in sight,' sez Susy J. 'You go look where it comes from.' So I asks questions an' I uses my eyes an' I pans here an' there an' at last I locates the crick. Gold enough thar for a hundred, but you an' me'll git the cream of it. Here's the mare. Lookin' fine an' fit as a fiddle. Come on up to the tent."

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He hardly gave Clayborne a chance for a word but he got one in at last.

"Is Susy J. here?"

"Is she here? Would I come without her—and Juneyer? You ought ter see him. Risin' four an' lookin' six. Would she let me come without her? No sirree. You know Susy J. The big fur-companies spiled my trade. Come May I started. We made it from Bent's Fort in thirty-five days along the trail you took. Thar's the tent. Thar's Susy J. Look, she knows ye! An' here comes Juneyer."

A stalwart youngster came running toward them and jumped into the Bearcat's arms. Clayborne felt a sudden pang of jealousy. The boy, set down, gazed at him shyly, then held out his hand.

There was a brief greeting and then Bowers hauled Clayborne off to file their claims on the new find. A sample pan showed the gold colors in the silt, "comin' like butter in the churn," as Bowers said and Clayborne knew the question of poverty was at an end for him.

"We met friends of yours at Sutter's Fort," said Susy J. that evening after Juneyer had been tucked away to sleep.

"Friends of mine?" asked Clayborne. "You mean Sutter? I hear the government has reimbursed him for the use of the Fort and it has been restored to him. He is not over popular just now, I understand, for he tried to suppress the news of the gold discovery until his harvest was in. I haven't seen him for a long time. I rode up from the Joaquin along Cosumne Creek and didn't go near the fort."

"We saw Sutter," said Susy J., glancing up from sewing a patch on Bowers' shirt. "But I didn't mean him. I meant the Lees."

"The Lees?" Clayborne knew that both of them were regarding him curiously, that his face flushed to the rapid pounding of his heart.

"Mr. Lee has come to the diggings and he has left his daughter at the Fort," said Susy J. "They got to be friendly with Captain Sutter while he was at Sonoma, I understand."

Clayborne said nothing. Bowers, muttering something inaudible, got up at a glance from his wife and left the little shack. Susy J. looked at Clayborne and as he did not meet her eyes, put a hand on his sleeve.

"Why don't you ride over to the fort, Mr. Clayborne?" she said. "Don't think I am interfering in your affairs, but——"

"You don't understand," said Clayborne.

"I think it is you and Miss Lee who have misunderstood," she answered. "She seemed to think you had gone back beyond the Mississippi. That you were married by this time."

"I, married?"

"There was some one called Miss Brandon, wasn't there? Very beautiful but proud, Marydel said."

"Marydel said. How did she know?"

"There was a picture in your clothes the night you captured General Vallejo and rescued Marydel Lee. It tumbled out when you fell. She is a woman—and curious. There was an inscription on the back, the side that lay uppermost. Being a woman, perhaps she was jealous."

"But she gave me no chance to explain."

Susy J. smiled.

"I am not born as you were, Mr. Clayborne," she said. "But I should be very glad to see you happy. Won't you tell me? Perhaps I could help you, for I am a woman."

Barriers of birth had long ago been obliterated in John Clayborne's mind. He had known no finer gentleman than Kit Carson, than Owens, Godey and Lajeunesse. They had not been born to the purple, and the heart of Susy J. brave yet tender, sharing her husband's rough life, was purer gold than any in the California hills. He told her everything.

"I shall ride over to the Fort tomorrow," he said finally. "I can trust your husband to look out for our claims. Say good-by to Junior for me when he wakes. I shall be back again before long—with good news, I hope."

"You will if you repeat what you have just told me," said Susy J.

BEFORE the sun was up Clayborne climbed to the Emigrant Trail, now worn and rutted with the travel of the gold-seekers of "Forty-Nine," and La Belle Rose bore him swiftly down through the foothills to the grassy plain where Sutter's Fort was no longer the lone outpost but the humming center of incoming life.

He found Marydel Lee by the river where she had fled while he was greeting Captain Sutter. He did not wait to change his attire, but went where he saw her white

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gown among the trees, the mare following after. Marydel stood up to greet him, her color coming and going, her breast heaving.

"I have been a long time coming, Marydel Lee," he said. "But I hope that this is the end of the trail at last."

She did not speak, but fondled the soft nose that La Belle Rose thrust into her hand, looking quietly at Clayborne.

He blurted all his story out at last, from start to finish.

"There has never been any one else but you, Marydel Lee," he said. "What I felt for Lucille Brandon had nothing to do with my heart. Our estates adjoined. It was a match that came about naturally, but I never loved her. If I had I should not have sent back her miniature, although I did not dream that you had seen it. I did return it at the first opportunity after I left you, after the ball at Sonoma when you would not dance with me. I knew what love was first when you rode down to me out of the wild oats. You must have seen it, Marydel."

Twilight had come, and her face was hardly more than a soft oval in the dusk but a light glowed in her eyes that gave him courage.

"Perhaps—perhaps I did," she said very softly.

La Belle Rose, munching at the juicy mints and grasses, raised her head and whinnied. But they did not notice her, for Clayborne had Marydel in his arms at last, their lips blending.

The Long Trail was ended.

The Will To Go On

by Clyde B. Hough

Author of "Head-Hunters and Gold," "Rescued," etc.

DONALDSON fell, though not abruptly, not in a state of collapse. He was physically weak enough for that, to be sure, but his will would not tolerate such resignation. He just sagged down to his knees reluctantly. Then his body lurched forward and his outstretched hands sank, wrist-deep, in the granulated arctic snow. Tiny icicles —frozen breath—hanging like pendants from his scraggy, sandy beard and mustache jangled together with a faint clinking. His head swung down at the end of his long, scrawny neck. He rested a little; then slowly, doggedly, struggled upward, straightened, stood up and staggered on.

Donaldson was as good as dead. Any one knowing the circumstances and Alaska

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would have known that. The man himself knew it, had known it even before that gray shadow began to flit along the slope above him. And yet he had the will to go on.

The gray shadow was an arctic wolf. the circumstances were these: Two hundred miles north of Circle City, working the richest dirt he had ever seen and living off the land, Donaldson had lingered too long. Winter had swooped down on that far nub-end of the earth two weeks ahead of schedule, and the game on which Donaldson had been living disappeared with the arrival of the cold and the snow.

What should he do? Two hundred miles over snow and ice without grub? It was a big chance but there was nothing else to do. To remain there where there was no game meant certain death. In other territory, along the way down, it was possible he would find an occasional squirrel. Donaldson took six thousand dollars worth of his gold-dust, cached the balance, shouldered his rifle and started toward Circle City.

That was six days ago and since then Donaldson had gone through a thirty-six-hour blizzard. And in the whirling, blinding snow, whipped and stung by the frost-edged wind, staggering and falling, he had dropped his rifle. He might as well have dropped it in mid-ocean. He never found it.

After that the sky had cleared and eighty miles of white, frozen desolation lay between Donaldson and Circle City—and nothing to eat. With the rifle he had been able to get a squirrel almost every day. But one can not kill squirrels with a hunting-knife and now Donaldson had no other weapon.

Hours dragged by. He began to stumble and fall. He must lighten up. From his back he unstrapped the six thousand dollars worth of gold-dust—twenty-three and one-half pounds—and flung it aside in the snow. That would make the going easier. But Donaldson knew it was all useless, knew that he could never achieve eighty miles without meat. And yet he had the will to go on.

Cold, bright stars sprinkled the heavens. The writhing, twisting fingers of the aurora streamed up and flared a ghostly light athwart the snow-shrouded earth. Donaldson was trudging down a narrow valley with a low ridge running along his right hand and sloping up to a sharp crest. It was on this crest, perhaps fifty yards away, that the wolf now appeared.

Donaldson tightened his belt and set his jaws. He felt that the end had begun. He drew his hunting-knife from its sheath and regarded it speculatively. It was slender and keenly pointed. His eyes narrowed craftily; he slipped the knife back in its sheath and patted it gently. Donaldson was not contemplating suicide. He trudged on slowly, making just effort enough to keep up his circulation. He was hoarding his strength.

The wolf flitted along the crest of the ridge, ever and anon dropping over to Donaldson's side. Weary hours dragged by and the wolf kept abreast of the man. Often the beast was out of sight for a long time, but Donaldson was never deceived. He knew that it was there, just below the ridge on the other side, stalking, watching, eternally, persistently, keeping pace with him.

He knew it would be like that to the end. He also knew for what the beast was waiting—that inky darkness which comes just before dawn and which is nowhere darker than in Alaska. The wolf would not attack while the stars and the aurora gave light for the man to see by.

MORE hours passed. Donaldson was drawing on his last reserves of strength. He looked at his watch in the starlight. It was nearly eight o'clock in the morning. The wolf was still stalking patiently, its hungry lips drawn back, its cruel fangs dripping the saliva of anticipation. Less than an hour and the black darkness for which the beast waited would come.

Donaldson tightened his belt another hole and set his jaws. He had matches and a piece of dry birch-bark—and the will to go on.

Watching the sky closely, the man struggled down to the bank of the small, frozen stream which ran along the center of the valley. In the lee of a bit of high bank he found some dry driftwood left there by the flood-waters of the Spring before. Donaldson carried the wood back a little way from the stream, laid his foundation on the snow, slipped off his mittens, brought out his matches and birch-bark and started the fire. Then he broke some

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boughs from a small spruce, and these he spread beside the fire to sit on.

He had judged his time well. In a few minutes the flare of the aurora flickered out, the stars dimmed and then came sudden darkness.

A little, and Donaldson saw two green eyes gleaming at the edge of the firelight. They were cruel, avaricious eyes. Donaldson watched them, his own eyes narrow, cold and crafty. He let his fire die down a little and watched the beast creep closer.

Donaldson was mentally measuring the time till the twilight of morning should melt the darkness. It would not be long, he knew. The wolf circled the fire, impatient to be at the man's throat, yet cunning and crafty and withal afraid of the fire. The man was afraid of nothing. He was playing a game and the stakes were the biggest stakes known to man—his own life.

Donaldson rose to his knees, threw aside the brush he had been sitting on, plucked a burning brand from his fire and snuffed it out in the snow. The wolf crept closer. Donaldson chuckled savagely. He was now preparing to meet brute ferocity with savage cunning. He was a savage. The clothes he wore might as well have been untanned hides; the hunting-knife at his belt might as well have been a stone knife.

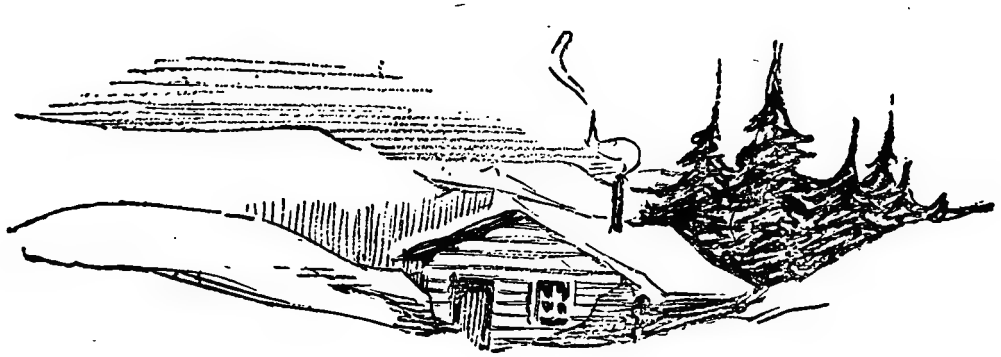
He slipped off his mittens, drew the knife from its sheath, gripped it hard, adjusted his knees in the snow to the best advantage and, with all of his will, called out his last reserve of strength. Then he quickly snuffed out the few remaining brands of fire and waited.

His blood was not freighted with the sluggish substance of recent food. His senses were unencumbered, alert, keen. His acute ears caught the careful *pad, pad* of the wolf's light feet beginning their advance. Donaldson gripped his knife harder, strained his senses and waited. Suddenly he heard the spring and the rush of weight through the air.

Quickly he set his knife-point in the right direction; the quick, hot breath was on his face. Then, like a flash, his own body shot forward and down and his hand went up.

The wolfish fangs clamped on empty air and Donaldson's hunting-knife went home to the hilt. There was a sudden twist of the enraged head, a slight slash of fangs on the man's arms; then he had the beast by the throat, and soon the wolf lay limp on the snow.

Half an hour later Donaldson once more felt life and strength pulsing through his body. Up to the crown of his head and down to the tips of his toes his racing blood was carrying the tingling strength and life-energy which had so recently moved the wolf. Daylight had come. Donaldson rose and went on—to Circle City.



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Ten Thousand Hectáreas

by Farnham Bishop

Author of "Snake Head."

"WHAT are you going to do about it?"

Barstow looked up in astonishment. He had sought the least frequented corner on the third-floor veranda of the Tivoli—Uncle Sam's big hotel in Ancon, the American suburb of Panama City—to think over the problem that had brought him to the Isthmus. After three solid hours of thinking and smoking he was as far as ever from a solution, when a voice spoke suddenly at his elbow.

"What are you going to do about it, Mr. Barstow?" repeated the speaker.

He was a tall, slender man, blond beneath his tropic tan, with a narrow smile and hard, light-blue eyes. His cheeks were deep hollows between the prominent cheek-bones and powerful jaw.

The easy erectness of his carriage, the cut and set of his high-collared white duck coat and the cock of his Ecuador hat gave him a distinctly military air. He seemed to have just laid aside his insignia and unpinned a long row of campaign ribbons from across his chest.

Barstow stared at him in bewilderment. He had never seen him before, this man who seemed to know him and his unspoken thought.

"Pardon my unsought intrusion into your affairs," said the stranger, bowing stiffly from the hips.

He spoke with a slight foreign accent, impossible to localize.

"But I could not help overhearing eight of the words you said tonight, when you were dining with your friend, the tourist."

His tone implied that Barstow was not a tourist, but a fellow adventurer and brother in arms.

"Those words told me all."

"The —— they did!" exclaimed Barstow. "What were they?"

"'Infernal swindle!'" quoted the other. "'Ten thousand *hectáreas*—San Blas country.' The first two words served to attract my attention as I passed your table, but were otherwise superfluous. Anything involving a tract of land in that part of the Isthmus is invariably a swindle."

"Have a cigar," invited Barstow. "I wish I'd known you before, Mr.——"

"—before you bought the concession," the stranger continued, ignoring the attempt to obtain his name. "That must have been about ten months ago——"

"Nine."

"You decided to invest in tropical products; hardwood, possibly——"

"Rubber."

"Ah, yes; of course; the rubber boom. So you were naturally only too glad to buy good rubber land, title and quality absolutely guaranteed by the seller, the sovereign Republic of Panama, for one dollar, gold, a *hectárea*, or forty cents an acre.

"If the land failed to grow rubber, you were to receive your money back. If the plantation succeeded, five per cent. of the gross annual profits were to go to the national treasury. Otherwise, the only condition was that if no work were done by you on the land within the first year after the signing of the deed, then the title would be void and your money forfeit.

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"Being a good business man, you read the text carefully before signing. But the forfeiture clause gave you no uneasiness at the time. You knew that the Canal was rapidly approaching completion and therefore felt that there would be plenty of labor available for your own enterprise. So you appointed some one here your agent and awaited developments.

"But nothing developed except vague excuses, until you became alarmed and came down to see for yourself. Then you learned that no one had been working on your land, because no one was anxious to commit suicide.

"When they first told you that the Caribbean side of the eastern end of the Isthmus, from a little beyond Nombre de Dois down into South America, was in the possession of a ferocious tribe of Indians who allowed no white men to settle within their borders, you were indignant that anybody should think you simple enough to believe such fantastic rubbish. That sort of thing was impossible in the year 1912, within fifty miles of the Canal Zone, with its electric-lighted towns and model police force.

"They referred you to McPherson, who monopolizes the tribal trade. And he told you that though his schooners had plied up and down the San Blas coast for thirty years, he would not dare try to spend a night ashore, nor would he take you there at any price.

"You went to the Panaman government, and it told you to come back *mañana.* You went to the American minister, and he told you that he had nothing to do with such affairs. You went to the American consul, and he told you that enough title-deeds to land in the San Blas country had been granted during the past four centuries to cover the whole place like a snow-storm, and that he wouldn't give a last week's lottery ticket for any of them."

"Those were his very words!" cried Barstow. "How on earth did you know?"

"It is an old story—the consul knows it by heart. The benches in the Cathedral Plaza are full of men whose pockets are full of papers like yours. There they sit and whine because neither of the two governments will pay any attention to them."

"But it is outrageous!" protested Barstow. "To sell land in a region overrun with savages, and then refuse to give the purchaser any protection!"

"Protection?" repeated the stranger. "If some one were to attack you on the streets of Panama City, would you ask a native policeman to protect you?"

Barstow chuckled. He had been an All-American half-back ten years before, when the game demanded human battering-rams, the bigger the better. Since then, he had put on more flesh than he liked to think of; but there was still plenty of muscle on his huge body. The thought of his asking for help from one of the futile manikins who pretend to police Panama City was delicious.

"They are very amusing, are they not, those little spiggoty policemen? But if you laugh at the idea of their protecting you in the city, why are you angry because they can not protect you in the jungle?

"The police are the sole armed force of the republic. Panama has no army. And the United States Army is down here to build the Canal, not to fight another Seminole War.

"Yet you must have an army of some sort behind you, Mr. Barstow, if you are to do anything with your property in the San Blas country."

"Have you any idea where I can find one?" asked the business man sarcastically. This would make a great story to tell at the club when he was back in New York.

The stranger bowed again.

"I am Captain Kessler," he said simply.

He said it in exactly the right way. Barstow was impressed, not because he knew about Captain Kessler, but because he didn't. The captain's manner implied a great and enviable reputation, to avow ignorance of which would be to proclaim oneself a tourist—the last thing that any tourist wishes to do.

"Ah, yes, yes! Sit down, captain, and tell me some more."

"I have come to you," said the captain, "because I could see that you were not like those whiners on the plaza benches. You will not let yourself be robbed of ten thousand dollars without a struggle."

"Not if I have a chance to put up a fight," declared Barstow.

"I am here to give you that chance," answered Kessler. "I, and I alone, know the one weakness of the San Blas—the only way to enter and conquer their forbidden land.

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"It is useless to try to land on their coast. They even refused to let President Mendoza of Panama set foot on the soil of his own republic when he went there on board the *Empire* in 1908. Nor can you go overland from the Zone; many parties have tried, only to be turned back by the guards the tribesmen maintain on every trail and stream leading into their territory.

"But the San Blas country does not extend all the way across the Isthmus. Back of it, on the Pacific side, lies the land of the Chucunaque, a negroid people, with whom the San Blas, who are intolerably proud of the purity of their own stock, are constantly at feud. Recently that feud has developed into something like a regular little war.

"The two tribes are fairly even in numbers and fighting ability. But the Chucunaque are handicapped by lack of modern firearms. Their head chief, Pilelé, an old friend of mine, told me that if I would furnish five hundred Winchesters he would raise five hundred picked young men and place them under my personal leadership. Such a force, under my command, would win the war and break the power of the San Blas forever.

"That was a month ago, when I was down there on a little expedition of my own. I returned to Panama City, where no one knows or cares what is going on in that remote part of the interior. I obtained an option on the Winchesters; 1886 model, 45-90's, with fifty thousand rounds of soft-nosed ammunition.

"But I had not enough money to buy the rifles and charter a schooner. The Chucunaque were unable to advance me any; their rivers are not full of gold, like those of the San Blas country."

"Gold?"

Barstow could not keep the thrill out of his voice at the sound of the magic word.

"How do you know there is any gold there?"

"Nearly every San Blas wears a pair of heavy earrings, and the women wear nose-rings, hand-hammered out of nuggets of virgin gold. The few explorers who have managed to stay there long enough to do a little prospecting have brought back high-grade specimens and stories of wonderful deposits they dared not stay to work.

"The old Spanish chronicles say the same thing. The San Blas country of today is the Darien of four hundred years ago, less known to white men now than it was when Balboa crossed there to discover the Pacific.

"It is full of abandoned forts and cities: Santa Cruz, Acla, Santa Maria de la Antigua. It is the land beyond the last frontier."

The land beyond the last frontier! Lost cities—Barstow thought of the ruins of Old Panama, where the tall tower of what was once a stately cathedral still stands between the jungle and the sea.

To find such places and revive them, to rescue a great, rich land from savagery and open it to civilization—what an adventure that would be! Better than tamely pocketing his loss and going back to his bachelor apartment in New York.

To sail on a schooner laden with smuggled rifles; to fight Indians and scale the peaks of Darien for gold! Barstow was the sort of man who rereads "Treasure Island" every year; and he was looking at the moonlight on the Bay of Panama.

"How much do you need?" he asked Kessler.

"Ten thousand more will cover everything. If you can furnish that, I will do everything else, and give you an equal share in the profits of the conquest. You need not even accompany the expedition."

"If I don't, then there won't be any expedition to accompany!"

> Oh, a sailor's life is the life for me,
> On the um, um, um, of the um-um sea,
> Where the um-ums rage and the wild winds roar,
> And the billows break on the rock-bound shore!

Barstow had got over his sea-sickness and was walking up and down the dirty deck of the *Cholita*. They were passing the Pearl Islands with a fair wind abeam—a rare thing in the almost windless Gulf of Panama. Presently the breeze would die away, and they would chug-chug and drift, chug-chug and drift, according to the whims and fancies of their gasoline kicker. But Barstow did not know that yet.

He was as happy as a twelve-year-old on Christmas morning, just to see the long, smooth rollers burst to foam on the shore of the nearest island, or to watch a pelican dive for a fish. As he tramped the deck, he creaked with much new leather—boots, puttees, belt and holster. The chaste splendor of his whipcord riding-breeches and white silk shirt was crowned with the biggest,

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showiest pith helmet ever sold in Kingston, Jamaica.

The sight of him brought joy to the eyes of the Greek skipper and his black-and-tan crew. The rejoicing was mutual, for Barstow had wanted them to look like pirates, and they did.

The Zambo cabin-boy shuffled to the lee rail, dumped a pan of sweepings and threw over an empty beer-bottle, which floated away in the schooner's wake. Pulling a shiny new automatic from its shiny new holster, Barstow emptied the magazine, scoring eight clean misses.

Then he heard the crack of another shot, and saw the neck of the bottle fly to pieces. Kessler, wearing pajamas and holding a long-barreled revolver in his left hand, grinned at him from the companionway.

"Good thing for me we weren't fighting a duel," laughed Barstow. "I know as much about shooting as I do about orchids and bug-hunting. Was that why you told the *Star and Herald* I was making this trip to collect botanical and entomological specimens?"

"We had to give some reason," answered Kessler. "And if you think you are not going to collect any insects, wait and see."

PILELÉ, head chief of the Chucunaque nation, dwelt at San Ambrosio, village on the river of the same name and about five miles above its mouth. The *Cholita* crossed the bar at flood and chug-chugged up the muddy stream, between unbroken walls of jungle.

Long before she came in sight of the town the sound of her exhaust brought the whole population down to the bank. And long before those on board could see the village they could smell it.

Aside from the filth, Barstow found San Ambrosio much like the native villages he had seen from the car-windows on the Panama Railroad. Also, there were fewer walls and less clothing. Children of all sizes ran about naked and unashamed; few adults wore anything above the waistline or overmuch below it.

Four posts, a thatch-roof, and a Balboa beer sign seemed to do for a house. The one frame building in the place was the residence of Pilelé.

The chief was on hand to greet the white men as they stepped ashore. Pilelé was a lean, dignified old mixed-blood, with Indian nose and cheek-bones, but a dark skin and kinky hair. Beside him stood a short, sturdy youth dressed in clay and a few inches of bark-cloth, whose big round head seemed covered with horse-hair, so straight and coarse it grew.

With phrases of Castilian courtesy, Pilelé led Kessler and Barstow to his house and invited them within. Unbidden, most of the population pressed in after them, till the big room that the chief used for a trading-store was packed tight with a stinking, staring throng.

"Tell them to get out of here!" commanded Kessler.

Instead of giving the order himself, Pilelé turned to the young man beside him. Instantly from the latter's lips came such a snarl of malignant contempt that Barstow, who was near him, fairly jumped.

"*Va, perritos!*" he cried, pointing to the door.

A squad of Zone police could not have cleared the room faster than did those two words of corrupt Spanish. Screaming, struggling, utterly regardless of each other's ribs and toes, the San Ambrosians fled as fast as they could squeeze past each other through the door.

Speeding the last one on his way with a kick from a small, splay foot, the ruler of the exodus leaned against the door-jamb, folded his arms and grinned contentedly.

"Who is that; the new chief of police?" asked Barstow.

Kessler was already putting the question to Pilelé.

"It is a mighty warrior from the hills," replied the old man in a mixture of Spanish and Chucunaque. "He has brought in three hundred of the young men who are to fight under your command. Two hundred more will follow soon."

This was unexpectedly good news to Kessler, who had fully expected to wait for weeks while the promised recruits trickled slowly in. He was an old hand at jungle warfare in South and Central America.

Looking keenly at the Indian's shoulders, the captain spoke suddenly in Spanish. The clay-covered savage sprang smartly to attention.

"Where have you served?" Kessler demanded in the same language.

"Colombian infantry, sir—Battalion of Santa Isabella."

"What grade?"

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"Sergeant, sir."

"Rest," commanded Kessler, well pleased with his own cleverness, as well as his good luck in finding such an assistant.

"What is your name?" asked Barstow, in the lisping Castilian taught in our universities and spoken nowhere else in the three Americas. He innocently used the courteous third person, as if addressing an equal. The Indian's eyes were blank, until Kessler put the question in the usual words.

"Enrique Arcilla, *señor.*"

Kessler barked a short, guttural laugh.

"Look at him!" he cried to Barstow. "Plastered with the stuff—and his name is 'Henry Clay'!"

NEVER did an expedition of this kind assemble and get under way more swiftly and smoothly. Kinky-haired porters from the coast villages, globe-headed fighting men from the hills, canoe-loads of fish, plantains and other provisions, all poured into San Ambrosio.

Once there, every one seemed possessed with a most un-native-like desire to be up and away. Barstow, of course, failed to appreciate this, while Kessler took it as a tribute to himself.

"They know better than to play tricks on me," he boasted. "I know how to handle these swine. Go sit in your tent and scratch yourself; I will attend to everything."

It seemed to Barstow, however, that the man who was attending to most things was Henry Clay. It was he who bossed the canoemen who landed the cases of arms from the schooner, and the porters who carried them to camp; Clay who mustered the warriors to receive their Winchesters, which they welcomed as old friends; Clay who brought the war-news to Kessler and spurred on Pilelé whenever the civil power showed signs of hanging back.

Yet the busy little Indian found time to act as Barstow's personal servant. He seemed to take a mysterious joy in looking after the big white man's welfare, cooking his meals and skilfully extracting chiggers from under his toe-nails and red-bugs from his ankles. Also, he seemed to regard the English form of his own name as a title of honor, for he insisted on being called by it.

Then came the advance into the interior. For the first eight miles they paddled in dugouts to the head of navigation on the San Ambrosio. There they spent the first night. In the morning, relays of *macheteros* at the head of the column began to cut a trail up the jungle-choked valley of another stream, a tributary, nameless till Barstow, after splashing through it for the eighth time, christened it Corkscrew Creek.

The stout business man had a tough time of it during the next three days. Overweight and out of condition, he sweated gallons and ached as if he had been beaten.

But he was no quitter, and sticking to his desk through ten New York Summers had taught him to endure heat. Luckily for him, he had come to the Isthmus in the "Little Summer of St. John," when the rainy season dies down to a brisk shower or two in the afternoon.

"How much further is it to the San Blas country?" he panted as they made camp on the fourth afternoon. "I'd like a battle for a change."

"You'll have a change tomorrow," answered Kessler. "Beyond that ridge up there lies one of the biggest of all the San Blas towns. We'll drop down on it tomorrow night. I'll see that enough get out alive to carry the word to their war-parties who are holding back the Chucunaque along the rest of the border.

"As soon as the warriors hear what has happened they'll drop everything and come back, blind with rage. We'll be entrenched and ready to shoot them down as they try to rush us, until the rest of the Chucunaque come up and spear them in the back."

"But how do you know the San Blas will rush in blindly like that?" asked Barstow, raising a weary leg to let Henry Clay tug off the boot.

Kessler smiled his narrow smile.

"You know how proud they are of the purity of their race? You've heard the Isthmian proverb: 'No man has ever seen a San Blas half-breed'? Well, I've promised our boys free loot—and free women!"

"What! Good Lord, Kessler, you don't mean——"

Barstow sat up on the creaking cot, his face a study in incredulity and disgust.

"Why, man, that's vile—loathesome—filthy! We can't do that sort of thing! It isn't war!"

"Indeed!"

Kessler's manner became heavily ironic.

"May I ask where you have acquired such authoritative information on the subject? Myself, I have only served in six

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wars in this hemisphere, beside the Herero campaign in German Southwest Africa.

"You must have learned a great deal in Sunday-school about the proper Puritan way of waging war on savages—and with them. I shall have you give a little moral lecture to our clay-smeared Galahads as soon as I return from inspecting the outposts."

He turned abruptly away from the tent-door and strode down the trail leading to the picket-line. Snatching his boot from Henry Clay's hand, Barstow pulled it on and laced it up himself.

"Blanked-dashed cold-blooded beast!" he declaimed to the tent-pole and the equally wooden-looking Indian. "Talk about savages—he's the lowest-down savage of the lot! The rest don't know any better, but he— I'll punch his Prussian head!"

Heaving himself to his feet, Barstow lumbered heavily through the camp and down the trail. He soon overtook the captain, who heard him crashing after him through the undergrowth and was waiting for him at the far end of a little clearing.

"Look here, Kessler!" Barstow began as soon as he entered the glade. "I'm here to fight my property and to bring civilization into this country; but I'm not going to fight foul. I'm paying you, and you're going to run this business as I say, or shut up shop.

"Either you give me your word of honor, here and now, to make our men leave the San Blas women alone—and leave them alone yourself—or we back-track out of here for the coast tomorrow morning. And I don't want any more of your sneering."

"So?" answered Kessler, his smile narrower than ever.

Barstow's temper exploded, as the other intended it should.

"Wipe that grin off your face or I'll knock it off!" he said, clenching his fists and starting across the clearing. Then he stopped and stood looking at the muzzle of the long-barreled revolver that had flashed out of the captain's holster.

"So we must back-track—as you so elegantly express it—out of here tomorrow?" Kessler sneered. "You great pink-faced baby; you——"

Here he called the other many evil names.

"Keep your hands and feet where they are—though why I should not let you play with your pretty pistol I do not know. It would be very amusing to see you trying to hit me with it.

"Do you think I am going to let your sniveling, hypocritical squeamishness cheat me out of a principality? I shall make myself the uncrowned King of Darien, while your bones rot here in the jungle."

"Do you mean that you intend to murder me?" asked Barstow steadily.

"Do you think that I will let you go to tell tales to the Zone Police?" responded Kessler.

Measuring the ground between them with a player's eye, Barstow thought instinctively in terms of the game he loved:

"Third down—ten yards to gain—and half a second left! I'll never make it before the whistle, but here goes!"

"I have foreseen everything," gloated Kessler. "I shall stop at nothing, and nothing shall stop——"

BOOM! The report of a heavy rifle thundered close to their ears. A cloud of smoke rolled across the narrow clearing midway between the two. Through it Barstow saw Kessler crumple down and disappear into the long grass.

Already set for a rush, he hurled himself across the glade and looked down at the fallen man. What he saw made him very sick.

"Nasty mess, isn't it?" said a sympathetic voice beside him in well-modulated English.

Spinning round, Barstow saw Henry Clay, Winchester in hand, standing at his elbow.

"Takes Kipling to describe this sort of thing properly," continued the Indian. "Remember that Burmese ballad of his?

> "A Snider squibbed in the jungle;
> Somebody laughed and fled,
> And the men of the First Shikaris
> Picked up their subaltern, dead,
> With a big blue mark on his forehead
> And the back blown out of his head."

"Who—who are you?" Barstow managed to gasp.

"You wouldn't know my name. I was in the class after yours, and then I went to the medical school. The tribe sent me there because they wanted that kind of a medicine-man. I always sat in the cheering-section and thought you were the greatest warrior that ever trampled eleven enemies into the war-path.

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"But I knew you were no scientist after my room-mate told me the funny questions you asked him about the paper, when he was monitor in the final exam. for that elementary botany course the sports used to take for a snap. I remembered that when I read that item about your expedition in the *Star and Herald*. Taken in connection with Kessler's last trip to the Chucunaque coast and the war that was going on then, I smelt gun-running.

"What Kessler didn't know, old man, was that the war ended three weeks ago with a smashing victory for the San Blas. The Chucunaque will keep their young men from raiding over the border for many moons, I'll bet!

"And since San Ambrosio was the likeliest port for the *Cholita* to make I took possession of it the day before you came with three hundred of our army of occupation. And I soon scared the truth, or most of it, out of that old four-flusher Pilelé.

"But—hold on—look here—let me get this straight!" cried the bewildered Barstow.

"Aren't you a Chucunaque yourself?"

"Lord, no!" said the Indian emphatically.

"I'm a San Blas—all of us are San Blas except the porter. Plastered ourselves all over with this infernal clay to make Kessler think we were a lot of dirty Chucunaque. Enrique Arcilla—Colombian Army—piffle! I learned to drill in the university cadet corps!

"Golly, what fun it was to listen to you two and see old Pilelé watching us land his Winchesters and march off with them to our own country! But we'll let up on his indemnity for it.

"I had a nice little surprize all ready for you and Kessler when we reached the border tomorrow. But perhaps it is better so."

He made a sign and a dozen other Indians stepped out from the jungle and surrounded the dead body. At a word from Clay one of them brought him the captain's field-glasses.

"Take these," he said, handing them to Barstow, "and follow me. I will show you something few white men have ever seen."

Forty minutes later the two stood on the crest of the ridge marking the boundary between the territories of the two tribes. Behind them lay the Pacific; before them the sun was sinking into the distant Caribbean. Below them lay a vast expanse of virgin jungle and open, rolling *sabanas*.

Many other ridges, running at right angles to the one they stood on, sloped down to the sea; in the valleys between ran sparkling streams. Here and there, among forests of rare hardwoods, tall groves of coconut-palms, and broad green pastures, rose the smoke of village fires, kindled for the evening meal.

Of the white man and his works there was no sign.

"Look at that nearest village," the Indian said to Barstow, who was busily sweeping the country with the glasses and discovering a new source of wealth at every glance. "See the wives and maidens busy about the cooking-fires, and the little bare babies running to meet their fathers as they come home from the hunt. See how clean the ground is kept around the long cane houses.

"See if you can find a locked door or a hungry face. You can not, for there is none in all the land.

"Look at that village and remember what Kessler boasted he would do to it. Among you white men there are many Kesslers. Can you blame us for guarding our home against them?"

"No!" said Barstow as they turned away and hurried down the trail to reach camp before dark.

"BY THE way," said the San Blas next morning as he and Barstow shook hands for the last time before the white man and his escort started back to San Ambrosio, "when you get back to the Zone, drop over to Colon and see McPherson the trader. He'll have something nice for you—a fifty-thousand-dollar draft on New York."

"What on earth for?"

"For the Winchesters and ammunition, of course! We must have them, and smuggled goods come high. To think of a white man's forgetting that he could make a profit!

"You're a highly successful filibuster, but I wouldn't boast about it in public. Stick to the naturalist story, tell how you were driven out of the country by the ferocious Indians who shot poor Kessler, and pretend to sell McPherson a gold brick or something for the fifty thousand."

"I know what I'll sell him," answered Barstow. "A perfectly good deed to ten thousand *hectáreas*."

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Such Bluff as Dreams Are Made Of

by **R.T.M.Scott**

Author of "A Rum Story but True."

AS THE smell of Bombay, with its cooking *ghee*, passed from the nostrils of the passengers on the small steamer *Baluchistan*, and as night fell upon the long monsoon swells of the sea, there came a piercing scream of terror which brought the few first-class passengers from the tiny smoke-room. They crowded at the railing, peering anxiously out to sea and at one another.

Then came that horrid cry of the ocean, first in Hindustani and then in English.

"Man overboard!"

The ship circled, dropped a lighted buoy and put off a small boat. In half an hour the engines were again churning their way to Karachi. Somewhere astern the body of a native steward was food for the sharks.

In the cramped smoke-room the half-dozen men crowded around the small bar and ordered an extra gin and bitters or an additional *chota* peg to wipe away the nasty incident. What cramped the smoke-room more than anything else was a decrepit square piano that the owners had wished upon the little ship. A long-legged youth or man—he might be either—sprawled upon the piano-stool and tinkled the jangling strings into a bit of ragtime.

"Pretty rotten start for the trip," said a bronzed Anglo-Indian, putting down his glass.

"Good thing it was only a native," remarked an oily-looking individual with cool indifference to the fact that the smoke-room steward was a native.

"He was human anyway," retorted the first speaker. "What nationality are you?"

"I'm European and that's sufficient," was the reply. "I'm in business in Karachi and I know the natives down to the ground. They are a poor lot."

The big Englishman walked over and confronted the man.

"I never saw you in Karachi," he said. "What's your name? Mine is John Marsden."

"While it is none of your business, my name is Mr. Victor Santee."

"Well, Mr. Santee," answered Marsden, "if I hear anything more from you against the natives I'll put you in a hospital at my own expense. Anybody else favor my sentiments?"

"Uh-huh," agreed the lanky one at the piano.

"Glad to hear it," said Marsden, extending his hand in friendly greeting. "What business are you in?"

"Dreams and crocodiles," was the laconic answer.

"Eh? Dreams and muggers?" asked the Englishman, puzzled.

"Uh-huh," said the man at the piano. "My name is Bert Smith. I'm studying psychology in the East and catching muggers in the rivers."

"Remarkable," said the Englishman.

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The man who called himself Santee relapsed into silence for the rest of the evening and there was no more quarrelsome discussion.

After breakfast the next morning a steward requested each of the first-class passengers to meet the captain in the smoke-room.

"Gentlemen," he said when they were all present, "I regret to state that something very serious has happened. I was commissioned in Bombay to carry to Karachi a very valuable bag of pearls for a native raja. Those pearls have been stolen from my cabin."

"Probably taken by a nat—" began Santee when he happened to notice Marsden and stopped. "You can commence by searching me, captain," he added.

"I am afraid that it will be necessary to search every person on this ship," replied the captain politely but firmly. "The pearls are worth several lakhs of rupees and they must be found."

"Right-o," spoke up Marsden. "You go ahead and do what you like, captain. There'll be no *tamasha* from us."

"Anybody else lose anything?" suddenly asked Santee.

"Uh-huh," said Smith. "I lost a watch."

"Very well," said the captain. "We'll look for that, too. What kind of a watch?"

"Gold-plated with 'S' on back," answered Smith, taking his usual seat at the piano.

"I am forced to order you to remain in this smoke-room, gentlemen until I give you permission to leave," remarked the captain quietly. "It may not be necessary to make a personal search."

Left alone, the passengers glanced at each other uneasily. The thief might be among them or he might not.

"The second nasty event has arrived," remarked Marsden.

"These things usually run in threes," said Smith as he faintly drummed an old refrain upon the piano.

"Are you speaking psychologically?" asked Marsden.

"Uh-huh," said Smith.

"Tell us something about your dream-study. Will you?" asked a passenger.

"Uh-huh; if you like," Smith answered. "I can illustrate best with a dream. I had one last night."

"Go ahead," said Marsden. "It will make us forget our troubles."

"WELL," began Smith, "I went to bed as usual last night. Like the rest of you on this trip I have a cabin to myself.

"After I got into my pajamas and crawled into my bunk I suddenly found myself out on deck and fully dressed. I was rather puzzled but did not realize my situation at first.

"I was standing by the railing when I discovered what was the matter with me. My arm was around the stanchion that supports the boat-deck above. Something attracted my attention and I moved sideways, forgetting that my arm was around the iron support. When I looked back I found that my arm had passed clean through the solid iron.

"That set me thinking and I realized that I wasn't awake. I found that I was dreaming. By thinking of the iron bar I could take hold of it and feel its supporting strength. By concentration I could forget it, so to speak, and pass my arm right through it.

"I did all kinds of tricks to test my superphysical powers and found that I could walk through closed doors and even run on the water beside the ship. One of my experiments was very interesting. I came in here and played this old piano—played music that I couldn't even read when awake.

"A funny thing happened though and cut things short. I ran into my bedroom steward. I think he was dreaming too but, of course, he didn't know he was dreaming.

"He seemed to think I shouldn't be out so late. Perhaps he thought I might fall overboard or something. Is this boring you?"

"No, no," came from several.

"I can stand it if the rest can," put in Santee.

"Well," continued Smith, swinging from side to side on the piano-stool and watching his listeners, "I finally induced the steward to accompany me to my cabin. I told him that I was asleep in there and that we would go and have a look at me. My Hindustani is pretty rotten and he may not have fully understood; but he followed, and I opened my cabin door and looked in.

"There I was breathing peacefully in my pajamas. The steward gave one look and shook with fear at seeing my double.

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He finally fell to the floor and I forgot all about him as I was too much interested in my sleeping, physical body.

"I sat on the edge of my bunk and watched my sleeping self. Then I noticed that my sitting and thinking self was becoming smaller and beginning to lose its shape. This frightened me.

"As I became smaller and lost more and more of my human shape I became more and more terrified until I woke up in bed just as the steward brought in my *chota-hazri*. The effect of the dream was so strong that the tea and biscuits remained untouched until I had dashed cold water on my face."

There was a dead silence until Marsden spoke.

"That's the most remarkable dream I've ever heard," he said. "I wish you had looked me up in your midnight adventure."

"Uh-huh," said Smith. "I did. You were asleep all right, but you were probably dreaming of the lanes and hedge-rows of old England. In other words, you had deserted the ship."

"Most astonishing," I broke in a passenger. "You didn't see anything of the pearl-thief, did you?"

"There's one thing I don't quite understand about the dream," replied Smith. "The native steward that I met had a white face, and it was your face, Mr. Santee."

The color slowly left Santee's features, and he appeared about to make a hot retort, when the captain entered.

"Mr. Smith," he said, "we have found your watch. It was in one of the small drawers of Mr. Marsden's washing-cabin. If you will identify it positively I am afraid I have a very unpleasant duty to perform. Is it yours?"

Smith took the watch.

"Uh-huh," he said. "I clean forgot. I left it there when I visited Mr. Marsden last night."

"But you didn't visit me," exclaimed Marsden, "and I don't know anything about the watch."

"Uh-huh; I know," said Smith. "You were asleep."

"Nobody will believe such a story," returned Marsden. "This leaves me under a cloud."

"We're all under a cloud," said Smith, "until the pearls are found. The watch isn't of much consequence."

"Of course, if you left the watch there, Mr. Smith, there is nothing more to be said," went on the captain. "And now, gentlemen, I am afraid that we can not avoid the awkwardness of a personal search."

Late that afternoon the captain, pale and haggard, gave up the search. They were again in the smoke-room.

"This means my financial ruin," he said. "Gentlemen, I thank you for your kind assistance and generous attitude."

He added in a forlorn tone—

"I suppose nobody can offer a suggestion?"

"Uh-huh," said Smith from the piano-stool. "I can."

"What is it?" asked the captain, a faint hope kindling in his weather-hardened old eyes.

"Dreams," said Smith.

"I don't quite understand," replied the captain.

"Much can be discovered in sleep, if you can only remember," explained Smith. "Tonight I will try to solve the riddle, but I want all of you to help me. Are you willing?"

The captain could not help looking disappointed, but he was ready to clutch at any straw.

"We will try, Mr. Smith," he said. "It can do no harm."

"Then," said Smith, rising, "let us move out of here to the dining-saloon. We can have our drinks there.

"I shall leave this sheet of paper and pencil upon the piano, and when I am out of my body in sleep I shall try to come here and write the solution of the pearl mystery. I think I can move the pencil just as I carried my watch to Marsden's cabin in my dream.

"I want the smoke-room locked so that nobody can enter, and I want all of you to try to dream with me. It will give me strength."

The simple sincerity of the long-legged dreamer stopped the smiles upon the faces of his fellow passengers. They had all heard of the occultism of India, and the scheme was finally adopted.

That night in the dining-saloon Smith refused to talk about dreams.

"I don't want you to get stale on the subject," he said. "We are all going to dream hard tonight. Let's be fresh for it."

"What about your muggers?" asked the

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big Englishman. "You said you were going to catch crocodiles. Do you catch them alive?"

"Uh-huh," said Smith. "Sometimes they're alive."

"Tell us about it," somebody urged.

But Smith wouldn't.

"I'll tell you tomorrow," he said as he went to his cabin.

SOME time in the night John Marsden was awakened by a hand upon his shoulder. He sat up in his bunk to find the light on and the lanky Smith standing before him in bathrobe and pajamas.

"What's up?" exclaimed Marsden.

"I've got it," answered Smith. "Dreamed the thing out. Slip on your bathrobe and come with me."

The ship was rolling heavily in the trough of huge waves, and the two men had to cling to anything they could grasp.

"Where are you going?" asked Marsden.

"To get Santee," Smith replied.

"Can't you leave him out?" asked the Englishman with a note of disgust in his voice.

"Better get him. He's got brains," said Smith.

Outside Santee's cabin Smith knocked and, getting no answer, shoved the door open. As the two men groped their way into the cabin the light was suddenly snapped on and they found themselves looking into the ugly muzzle of a black automatic. Behind the gun was Santee sitting on the edge of his bunk.

"Do you want to see me?" queried Santee in a menacing tone and still keeping the pistol leveled at his visitors.

"Uh-huh," said Smith. "Just had a dream."

"Can't it wait till morning?" growled Santee, laying the weapon beside him on the pillow.

"Dreams fade," replied Smith. "This is a weird one. Thought you might have some ideas about it."

"All right," grumbled Santee. "Can you make it short?"

"Uh-huh," said Smith. "In the first place I wasn't conscious of dreaming this time. I found myself in a small boat at night in the mouth of a great river full of crocodiles. Waves from the sea were coming in and my boat was pitching badly.

"The blackness of the scene and the wild wind and water terrified me. I was bewildered and did not know which way to row.

"Suddenly out of the distance came a faint sound. As it grew nearer my terror increased as I recognized something that seemed impossible upon that gloomy waste of rolling water. It was the sound of a piano."

Smith stopped for a moment, watching with half-shut eyes the black pistol on the pillow.

"Remarkable," said Marsden.

"But it wasn't music that I heard," continued Smith. "It was a thrumming sound as if the piano were being rocked by the waves. At regular intervals a deep or jangling thrum would come out of the darkness.

"Then, through the murk, I saw the thing. It was a huge, black piano afloat upon the waves. Like the piano in the smoke-room it was square and there was something lying upon it. I stared in fascination as it drew nearer and the regular thrum, thrum, became louder and louder.

"Then I saw that the object upon the piano was a man. His legs hung loosely over the white key-board and, as the piano rocked with the waves, they flopped upon the keys, causing the regular thrumming that I had heard. Instinctively I knew the man was dead, and the horror of it woke me."

"And what do you think your silly dream means?" demanded Santee. "Do you think it will help you find the pearls?"

"Uh-huh," replied Smith. "I'm going to search the piano in the smoke-room. Nobody's looked there."

"Rubbish," said Santee. "We can do it after breakfast if you insist, but I'm going to sleep now."

"No," said Smith. "I'm going to get the captain and do it now. Dreams fade. I thought you might get the other passengers and meet us at the smoke-room in half an hour."

Santee was at first obstinate but in the end agreed with bad grace.

Smith and Marsden found the captain lying wide-eyed in his bunk. It was evident that he had not been able to sleep, and his tired face showed the misery he had been suffering. Any kind of action was welcome to him, and he readily agreed to unlock the smoke-room and make the suggested search.

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"I had hoped to retire next year," he said, "and live with my family."

The three men made their way along the narrow passages of the rolling ship. Outside the door of the smoke-room Marsden suddenly grasped Smith by the arm. There was heard from within the thrum of a discordant crash upon the loose-stringed piano.

Tensely the three men stood listening. Again and again, with the rolling of the ship, came that thrum of strings. The captain, who had not heard the dream, seemed puzzled; but Marsden looked in utter amazement at Smith.

"Your dream!" he ejaculated.

"Uh-huh," said Smith.

The captain put his hand on the door and it swung open.

"Not locked!" he exclaimed.

They crowded into the darkness, the captain feeling for the electric switch. Something soft banged upon the keys of the piano, sending a racking discordance to their nerves.

Then came the light, and Marsden and the captain recoiled at the sight before them. Only Smith walked over to examine the horror.

Upon the piano, lying on his back with his neck between the jaws of a great steel trap, was Santee. His tongue protruded and his eyes were terrible to see. His dangling legs drummed upon the keys as the ship rolled.

Smith coolly took something from the clutching grasp of the dead man.

"I think these are your pearls," he said, handing a small bag to the captain.

AT BREAKFAST that morning Smith was plied with questions.

"Explain! Explain!" came from his fellow passengers.

"It is very simple," he answered. "I saw Santee throw the steward overboard the first night. Nobody else saw it, and I lay low to find out the reason for the murder. When I heard of the pearl robbery I guessed that the dead steward had been a witness to the theft."

"You will remember that I had a curious dream that first night. I awoke in time to see Santee leaving my cabin. I deduced that he stole my watch and put it in Marsden's cabin out of spite on account of their quarrel or to throw the suspicion of the pearl robbery upon Marsden.

"When I told my dream I watched your faces. Santee showed a slight concern when I spoke of entering the smoke-room and playing the piano."

"Then I touched up the keys a little and found two more dead ones. Something had interfered with its works. The rest was easy."

"But the big steel trap?" asked Marsden.

"Bear-trap from the Rocky Mountains," said Smith. "I intend to use it for dacoits from over the border. I call them crocodiles. It appears that Santee and I both had skeleton keys.

"It was easy for me to enter the smoke-room and place my trap on top of the piano under a few newspapers. I calculated that Santee would try to get the pearls from where he had hidden them in the piano and I thought he would stick some part of him into the trap. I didn't think, however, that he would stick his head between the jaws."

"Then the dream about the dead man on the piano was only fiction?" asked Marsden.

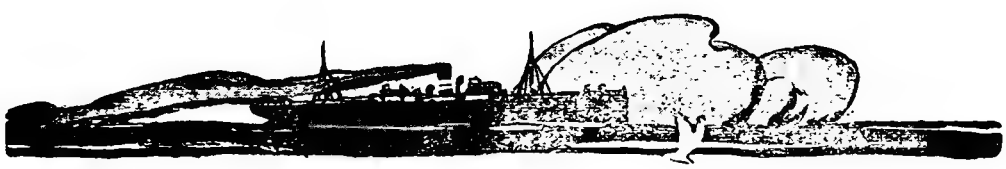
"No," replied Smith; "the funny part is that the darn dream actually happened. However, I was thinking hard about the piano before I went to sleep."

"What's your real business?" asked the captain.

"C. I. D." was the drawling reply.

"Criminal Intelligence Department!" exclaimed Marsden.

"Uh-huh," said Smith.



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The Speck in the Apple

by G. A. Wells

Author of "Promoters," "The Redemption of Bill Holland," etc.

FOR a week or more Jim Flynn had meant to speak to John Mason about it, but somehow or other the opportunity had never presented itself until that morning, just after roll-call, when he found himself alone with his brother policeman in the locker room of the third district police station-house. Even then he shrank from the job as from a scorching flame, for it consisted of one of those delicate personal matters that most people like to let severely alone. But it was expected of him. Flynn knew that by the way his companions had been looking askance at him for the past several days.

Fate had made him a sort of relative of Mason's—they had married second cousins. That relationship, distant as it was, seemed to preclude any doubt that it was strictly Jim Flynn's duty to bring the matter to Mason's attention. So, as opportunity now offered, Flynn saw plainly that it was up to him to make the most of it. It required more than the physical courage Flynn possessed to approach the subject, and he knew that he would a thousand times rather take a good beating than say anything to Mason about what had been uppermost in the thoughts of the twenty-one day and the twenty-nine night-detail men who reported for duty at the third district station-house.

"Well, John," Flynn opened the subject after gulping hard a couple of times and screwing his courage to the highest pitch. "I guess you'll kind o' hate to leave the force, eh?"

John Mason was at that moment hanging his slicker in his locker, preparatory to going home for his day's sleep. He paused and gave Flynn's face a searching glance. The lockers were in the basement of the station-house and it was rather gloomy down there in the early morning, but Mason had no difficulty in reading what was in his fellow-officer's face. He licked his lips nervously.

"What do you mean, Jim?" he asked, though it was a superfluous question, as both of them well knew.

"I hear you're going to resign from the force," answered the other.

Mason made no reply until he had completed putting his accouterments in the locker; then he said—

"I haven't thought about it."

"Oh! That so?" said Flynn.

Flynn hadn't meant to sneer when he spoke, but it was next to impossible not to sneer when speaking to John Mason. Everybody about the place had been sneering at Mason, more or less, since the Comfort Avenue affair.

"Where did you get that dope, Jim?" Mason inquired, slamming the locker door vindictively.

"Why, I heard some of the boys talking about it a couple of days ago," was the answer.

"They said I was going to resign?"

"Oh, they might not have said in so many words that you were going to resign," Flynn modified, "but they did say they thought you were going to resign—that

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you were going to leave the force, was the way they put it."

Mason said nothing more until the other had finished changing from uniform to "cits," which he always did when going off duty in the morning.

"Jim, let's you and me sit down over there on the bench and talk," Mason invited with a certain grimness shading his words.

He led the way to the bench at one end of the locker room, the other following, and they sat down. Mason turned and looked squarely into his brother officer's eyes.

"Now then, Jim, I want you to tell me just what the boys have been saying about me," he demanded. "We've got to talk about this some time and this is as good a time as any. Don't be afraid of hurting my feelings; speak right out."

"Well, maybe it ain't none of my business, John, but I thought you ought to know."

Flynn began to hedge, feeling more than ever that his was a disagreeable task.

"But it's my business," said the other harshly. "I guess it's my business when every man on the force is saying dirty things behind my back, ain't it? You and me happen to be better friends than the others, Jim, and I think it's up to you to tell me what's going on. They shut up like a lot of clams when I come around. Now what about it?"

"As far as I'm concerned it's impersonal, John."

"No apologies, Jim Flynn," said Mason bruskly. "If you've got anything to say, say it; if you haven't, I'll go home."

THERE was something defiant about Mason's tone. It was challengingly sharp. It gave Flynn the added courage to speak out. He decided that nothing would be lost by perfect frankness.

"Well, it's like this, John," Flynn said after an interval. "Ever since that night on Comfort Avenue when you let 'Roxy' Hogan beat you up before his friends and take your club away from you and send it in to the captain by a kid next morning, the boys around here have been talking. You ran from Roxy, didn't you, John?"

Flynn put the direct question.

Mason hesitated the barest fraction of a second before he gave a reluctant "Yes."

"Well, that's what the boys talk about most," Flynn went on. "In a way of speaking there wasn't anything so awful disgraceful about Roxy Hogan beating you up and taking your club away from you. Any man in town who knows Roxy will tell you he's a mighty tough bird to fool with. He leads his crowd around by the nose and makes 'em jump through a hoop. You ain't the first cop he's beat up that way."

"Go ahead," said Mason when the other paused.

"But you're the first man from this station-house that ever run, John," Flynn continued. "There's no denying that, because the records don't show any other case of it. That's what the boys don't like; it sticks in their craws. This district never had a running cop before; they've all stood up and took what's coming to them and been the last to leave, unless they got hauled away in an ambulance. Don't you see?"

"And the boys think I disgraced them and myself by saving my life, eh?" sneered Mason.

"They don't like the idea of a man from this district running, that's all," replied the other quietly. "Anyhow, how do you know you saved your life by running away from Roxy Hogan?"

Mason laughed sardonically.

"Because Roxy Hogan had a big knife in his hand and was coming for me like a house afire, that's how I know," he said emphatically. "Listen here, Jim! When I was a kid I had a scrap with another kid, and he was one of the toughest little birds I ever saw. He slashed me on the arm with a knife. I can show you the scar to this day, running from shoulder to elbow.

"Well, I bled like a stuck pig from that slash and I thought sure I would die. It took the heart out of me for fighting, and ever since that day I've been scared to death of a knife. It's a mania with me. When I saw Roxy Hogan coming at me with his knife the other night, I didn't think about anything but getting away from there. If you want the truth of it, I don't think I had my right mind when I bolted. The sight of a man with a knife nearly sets me crazy. I had to run from Hogan. I couldn't help it no more I can help dying."

"Cops are not supposed to run from anything, not even a knife in the hands of a man like Roxy Hogan," said Flynn solemnly.

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"But I wasn't a cop then; I wasn't anything except a scared animal."

"Yet even a scared animal will stand and fight it out if you put it up to him," rejoined the other.

Mason frowned. It seemed to him a useless task to try to convince Flynn of the justice of his running away from a knife in the hands of the gang leader and alleged gunman, Roxy Hogan.

"Here's another thing, Jim," Mason said after a while. "I've got a wife and two kids looking to me to stand by them. You ought to know what that means; you've got a wife and kid of your own to look out for."

"My ——, John, don't go hiding behind a woman's skirts to excuse yourself!" snapped Flynn wrathfully. "Yes, I've got a wife and kid to look after, but the devil take me if I'd disgrace myself and them to keep 'em from going to the poorhouse. A man's got to look at life as a whole, not just a little part of it."

"That may be your idea, but Mollie and the kids come first with me," answered the other gruffly. "I'm not committing suicide if I can help it. Who's going to look after my wife and the kids if anything happens to me?"

"That's not in the question, John. Mollie and the kids haven't got anything to do with this."

"Aw, what are you trying to hand me!"

"The thing is this," continued Flynn, not heeding the interruption. "You're a policeman. You took the job with a full understanding of the duties of a policeman. When you accepted the job with that understanding, you surrendered your right to act as an individual. You're part of a machine for law and order and you've got to do your part, or the machine is out of kilter. Society is depending on you to protect it. A policeman is a policeman first, and something else next."

"I can't see it that way."

"I think you've proved that," returned the other cynically. "Right or wrong, though, that's the only way a policeman can look at it and be honest with himself and the force. If you don't want to abide by the rules the only thing left for you to do is step down and make room for somebody who will abide by the rules. There ain't no other way out of it.

"John, the fact is, you're like a speck in an apple. You don't belong in a healthy body because as long as you stay you blemish the whole fruit and risk spoiling the entire apple. The force is the apple and you're the speck. Now what are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing," answered Mason promptly.

"Yes you are, John," the other half snarled.

"I've got to have a job, haven't I?" defended the other man.

Flynn waved a hand.

"You can get a job some place else," he said.

"No. I'll stay where I am. I can live it down."

"No you can't, John. It's marked up against you in big letters, and there ain't a chance in the world anybody will forget it. Between you and me, the old man wanted to fire you then and there, but Adam Cole, chairman of the board of safety, is a personal friend of mine, due to a little job I done for him once, so I had a talk with him. I asked him to call off the chief and give you a chance to resign. I thought sure you'd want to quit after the Comfort Avenue business, John, but so far you haven't done anything about it, and Adam Cole's been asking me how it was.

"When you consider that men have been broke or discharged for a whole lot less than you've been guilty of, you're lucky they didn't prefer charges and bounce you right then. I put it up to you here and now, John, are you going to resign or not?"

"No," came the quickly spoken, rebellious response.

Jim Flynn's lips curled scornfully as he got up and looked down at his fellow-officer.

"The trouble with you, John, is you're too dirty yellow to be a man, ain't you?" he snarled, and wheeled and strode away.

WHEN Mason arrived home half an hour later he found his wife's cousin, Flynn's wife, just coming out the front gate.

"Hello, Mary, how's tricks?" he greeted genially.

"Good morning," responded the woman curtly and hurried away down the street.

John Mason looked after her until she had rounded a corner out of sight; then he walked around the house and entered the kitchen with a thoughtful expression on his face. His wife was in the kitchen getting breakfast ready for him.

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"Mollie, what's the matter with Mary?" Mason inquired of his wife after he had kissed her and sat down to await breakfast.

"Why?" answered Mollie non-committally.

"I met her at the front gate just a minute ago and when I spoke to her she growled at me and beat it," said Mason. "Is she mad about something?"

"What makes you think she's mad?" Mollie equivocated, looking at her husband.

Mason saw something in his wife's face that brought him up short. He read it as easily as if it were in big print.

"Mollie, what has Mary Flynn been telling you?" he demanded with a sinking of the heart.

His wife seemed disconcerted by the abruptness of the question and almost capsized the coffee-pot when she started to pick it up.

"Why nothing, John," she evaded again, smiling at him in an effort to cover her confusion. "It's all right, John; you needn't worry about what Mary says. She likes to talk, you know, and her bark's worse than her bite."

Mollie's speech had somewhat the similar effect of waving a red rag in the face of an angry bull. It fired John Mason with curiosity and anger, and he swore under his breath.

"Out with it, Mollie!" he commanded tersely. "Mary Flynn has been spilling a lot of ugly gossip in your ear, and I want to know what it is."

"Gossip? What about?"

"About me. Come clean, Mollie!"

"Wait till I get breakfast ready, then I'll tell you all about it," replied Mollie quietly, seeing the futility of further evasion.

While they ate breakfast Mason's wife related to him what Mary Flynn had related to her not half an hour before. The subject of Mary Flynn's conversation with Mollie Mason had been identical with that of Jim Flynn's talk with John Mason while the two men sat on the bench in the locker room of the third district station-house. It was about Mason's disgrace in showing the white feather to Roxy Hogan.

Mason did not attempt to defend himself to his wife; he immediately saw how useless any such attempt would be. There was something about Mollie Mason's manner that forbade argument. When she started to talk it seemed that the dams of reserve within her gave way and loosed a flood of words.

She bravely and loyally tried to smooth off the rough edges of the story as Mary Flynn had told it, but it was a hard enough tale at its best and it was hard for Mollie to tell. She also tried very hard to keep reproach out of her voice, but the condemnatory note would creep in now and then in spite of her, and John Mason involuntarily cringed as from the lash of a whip.

Before Mollie had half finished the recital of her husband's disgraceful episode as told to her by Mary Flynn, Mason was heaping anathema upon his head and calling himself all kinds of a fool that he had not taken his wife into his confidence in the first place, instead of trying to hide the story of his disgrace from her. Mary Flynn was biased; she bore Mason an ancient grudge, and, coming from her lips, the Roxy Hogan incident lost nothing in the telling.

"But I don't believe half she said, John," Mrs. Mason concluded magnanimously. "You know how Mary stretches things. If you ran from that man I guess you had good and sufficient reasons."

It was good of Mason's wife to try to gloss over the disgrace that had befallen her husband, but at the same time Mason could not help but detect the insincerity of it.

"You bet I had," he tried to defend himself, vainly believing that his vehemence would convince if his words did not. "The best reasons in the world. If I hadn't got out of Hogan's way when I did you would be a widow and the children orphans about this time."

"Tell me about it, John," she requested.

So he began at the beginning and told her the story straight through to the end, omitting nothing, but acting no more than human in that he qualified and modified several features of a rather incriminating pattern.

He told her how, while passing the Emerald Isle Club down on Comfort Avenue one night, he had been called in to quell a fight. He told her how Roxy Hogan, the acknowledged leader of a tough gang in that district, incensed at his interference, had fallen upon him tooth and nail. How Hogan had, with certain assistance from his henchmen assembled, finally beat him down. How Roxy Hogan had, in a black rage, drawn a

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knife and come for him while he lay prostrate on the floor, and how he, Mason, seeing his danger, had scrambled to his feet and beat a madly running retreat, leaving his club behind him.

John Mason was accustomed to the various expressions that came and went on the face of his wife; he knew how to gage them to the fraction of a shade of meaning. But never before had he seen such an expression in her blue eyes as he saw while he was telling her his story.

"It's awfully nice of you to think of me and the children first, John," she told him when he had finished his narrative. "Still——"

She stopped there and got up from the table quickly and began to clear away the dishes. Mason did not insist on his wife completing what she had started to say. He knew what she had in mind without being told. That abrupt halt of speech, terminating with the ominous "still," was more eloquent than the volumes that Mollie Mason could have spoken. Her attitude was painfully plain to her husband, and he shrank within himself.

John Mason got up from the table with the effort of a man many years older than he was, and went out on the back porch to smoke his accustomed pipe of tobacco before retiring for his day's ration of sleep. Of the seven hours he lay in bed that day he slept but two, and spent the remaining five either lying open-eyed staring at the ceiling, or tossing restlessly. It is extremely bad for a man to be discredited in his wife's opinion.

A FEW days later Mason was pulled off the Comfort Avenue beat and put on the telephone in the third district station-house. It was not necessary to knock him down with a club to make him understand the purpose of the shift; had somebody publicly slapped his face he could not have been more ashamed. When he sat down to the telephone that first night he felt as he had felt when, a boy at school, he had been perched on a high stool in a corner with a dunce's cap on his head.

Captain Weber, in command of the third district, was reputed to be a disciplinarian of the most pronounced type. He seemed to derive a diabolical satisfaction from belittling and humiliating those who incurred his displeasure, and certainly Policeman John Mason was filth in the eyes of his captain these days. The telephone job was, in the opinion of the force, the worst form of punishment that could be meted out to a policeman.

The whole force looked upon the station-house telephone jobs as fit only for girls and sissy-men, not for red-blooded he-cops. The man who held down that job was a bug, a worm, an insect, a snail on the ground—anything and everything low and despicable. He was the most deplorable object on the face of the earth. His duty it was to answer calls and receive word of trouble that presumably better men were sent out to investigate.

It was evident to Mason that his fellow-policemen held him in great contempt. They did not censure him by word of mouth; theirs was a more effective and painful system. They ignored him; they rigorously ostracized him; they shouldered him out of councils where formerly he had been a welcome member. When they played checkers or cribbage while waiting for roll-call Mason always idled aside.

When he desperately invited some one to play a game with him he invariably got an excuse in reply, an excuse so palpably trivial and unsatisfying that he could not help but understand the purpose of it. He lost his place on the district ball team, though none could hold down second base or wield a bat better than he. His place as champion standing broad jumper of the district was usurped by the man whom he had beaten by a good eight inches at the last elimination track meet. In short, he entirely lost caste with every man reporting for duty at the third district police-station.

Captain Weber took it upon himself to make John Mason's life miserable for him. Mason's shoes were never so well polished, his uniform never brushed enough, his shield or the buttons on his tunic never glistened sufficiently to save him a sneering reprimand for being slovenly at inspection, though a just judge would have acclaimed him immaculate in all respects. He was fined time and again for infractions of rules that other policemen broke with impunity.

John Mason did not need to be told that there was a concerted campaign afoot to drive him from the force in disgrace.

Yet in a way he was intensely gratified to be put on the telephone at the station-house. Almost anything was better than

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to remain on the Comfort Avenue beat where he was subject to all manner of insult and ridicule. The people down there, almost universally partizans of Roxy Hogan, had his measure. His very presence on the beat was an insult to them. They hated and admired a brave policeman, but they only hated a cowardly one. They gave him the odious titles "Running Cop," "Race Horse," "Yellow Boy," "Big-Chief-Afraid-of-His-Shadow" and others equally opprobrious.

Women who sat with their families on their front door-steps in the evening, pulled their children from Mason's path as from a loathsome thing, and the men mocked him openly and called him unspeakably vile names under their breaths. The boys trailed him along the street, jeered him and surreptitiously threw mud at his back. The young men at the Emerald Isle Club made no bones about shaming him to his face and spat their contempt for him.

The whole district knew that he, a policeman on duty in uniform, had been beaten up by Roxy Hogan and had run, leaving his club, the symbol of his prowess, behind him. They made Mason pay dearly for that disgrace. Several times he had attempted to retaliate by catching an offender astray from the protecting flock and taking him in. But the desk-sergeant had immediately let the culprits go, while he turned an oathful reprimand against his captor.

"Mason, you bring in Roxy Hogan and we'll talk business—not before," said the desk-sergeant rebukingly on these several occasions.

John Mason was indeed swallowing bitter pills.

The bitterest pill of all, however, was that administered to him by his wife. It was her attitude toward him. She did not condemn him in so many words, but he would have been totally blind not to understand that Mollie, too, regarded him with something near contempt. It was the look in her blue eyes, the lukewarmness of her kiss, her indifference, the many little mannerisms by which women show their likes and dislikes.

If John Mason lived in hell at the station-house or on the beat, abused on every side, he lived in the utmost depths of the uttermost purgatory at home, with his wife prodding his guilty conscience with the pitchfork of silent accusation. Mollie Mason, *née* McGuire, came of fighting Irish stock; she could not reconcile her own nature to that of her husband.

In spite of the misery of it all, John Mason would not take the easiest way and give up. When he thought of resigning to rid himself of the manifold miseries of his life, and he frequently did, he banished the thought at once. Just why he stayed on when logic dictated that he should get off, even he could not say. It might have been his dumb stubbornness, the contrariness of him, his resentment at the treatment accorded him. It might have been anything at all that moved him mentally to tell his traducers to go to the devil and determined to stick it out.

So he stayed on, and, night after night, sat at his desk in a corner of the third district station-house, taking calls from better men than himself for better men than himself to act upon, proscribed by every man on the force, known far and wide as the cowardly cop who had disgraced himself and placed the uniform in disrepute by running from a man with a knife.

IT WAS the tenth day after John Mason had first sat down at the telephone desk in the corner. Only Mason and the desk-sergeant were in the big room at the time. The sergeant had his feet cocked comfortably on his desk, his hands were locked about his stomach as if to hold it in leash, and he was snoring noisily. It was a little after two o'clock in the morning when the telephone bell jingled wildly. In a lethargic fashion Mason lifted the receiver from its hook and put it to his ear.

"One hundred," he answered, giving the number of the station-house, thinking it to be one of the half-hourly calls from some patrolman. "Oh! Yes, this is the station-house."

The party at the other end of the wire, plainly an excited female, began speaking rapidly, her words beating a veritable tattoo against Mason's ear-drum. As she progressed with her story the lethargic expression on Mason's face gradually gave way to one of interest, and this to total absorption. He did not interrupt once, but sat frowning, absently making hieroglyphics with a pencil on a pad of paper lying on the desk.

"Who'd you say you were?" he asked

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when the voice had ceased speaking and was followed by a series of choking sobs. "Burke's wife. All right, Mrs. Burke, we will attend to it right away."

Mason replaced the receiver on the hook and sat for some minutes looking at the snoring desk-sergeant through half-closed eyes. His expression was one of acute speculation. His lips were tightly drawn over his teeth and the hands on the desk before him clenched and unclenched spasmodically. He started to get up quietly from his chair, and the desk-sergeant opened his eyes without any other movement and regarded him questioningly.

"Sergeant, Roxy Hogan has just killed Tim Burke in Burke's gambling joint over on First Street," said Mason abruptly.

The sergeant's feet came to the floor with a bang and he leaned far across his desk and stared at Mason unbelievingly.

"Huh? What's that? Roxy Hogan killed Tim Burke?" he ejaculated.

"Yes. Burke's widow called up and reported it," explained Mason.

The desk-sergeant's training as a policeman came to his rescue and he became instantly alert—the business-like minion of the law.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish, but we've got to get Hogan just the same," he snorted. "Get hold of Norris and Dooin, on Quinn's beat, and tell 'em to go after Hogan. You ought to locate 'em at Quiller's restaurant about now. Then call up headquarters and make a report so they can throw out a net. Hustle now before Hogan gets a start!"

Mason made no move toward the telephone, and the desk-sergeant snarled at him like some wild animal.

"Did you hear me?"

Mason nodded.

"I did, but I'm not going to do any more telephoning from this place," he said quietly.

The sergeant's face went violently red and he made strange noises in his throat.

"Huh? Say, you ——"

"I'm going after Hogan myself," broke in Mason with the same quietness.

"Huh? You? Why, you yellow ——"

"And while I'm gone you can look after the phone or leave it alone," interrupted Mason again, starting for the door.

"Hey, you fool, come back here!" yelled the sergeant.

Mason did not stop.

"Take a club along, anyhow!" the sergeant added.

Mason turned at the door and looked back. He spread his hands.

"I don't want a club, a gun or anything but just these," he said with a glance at his hands. "I owe Hogan something and I intend to pay him, but if I can't take him with my naked hands I won't take him. If I'm not back with him in an hour I won't be back at all."

With that he passed out. For a few moments the sergeant stared wide-eyed at the door through which his subordinate had disappeared; then he burst into a derisive laugh.

"The yellow-streaked hound! I believe he has got nerve after all," he muttered to himself; then, suddenly remembering, he flung himself into the chair lately vacated by Mason and grabbed the telephone to notify headquarters of the killing.

ONCE outside the station-house Mason stood for a brief interval considering. Tim Burke's place was a good quarter of a mile to the east of him, but he thought it very unlikely that a visit there would do him any good. In the first place Burke's was not in Hogan's district; Burke's lay in the opposite direction to the west, and there the man would feel like a stranger in a foreign country. Burke had a good following in his own domain, and the boys over there would be clannishly hostile toward the man who had killed Burke.

In the next place it wasn't natural for a killer to remain for any great length of time so close to the scene of his crime; all his senses would unite to force him away. True, Hogan had not been seen in his own district since the night he had beaten up Mason, for orders had been passed to bring him in, but Mason was rather certain that he would be there now. Putting himself in Hogan's place, Mason instinctively knew that, under the same set of circumstances, he himself would want to be in the environment he knew the best. There, at least, he would have many things in his favor. It was the homing instinct.

Deciding on that, Mason started off at a brisk walk down the street. Five blocks west he went, then turned south along Longest and followed that street two blocks

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before he turned west again down Craydon Street toward the river.

The streets he traversed at that early hour in the morning were wholly deserted, but he had gone but a short way along Craydon when he espied another man walking rapidly ahead of him half a block away.

Down on the next corner an antiquated gas-lamp threw its yellow rays over a restricted area, and, as the man ahead passed within the area of light, Mason could have sworn that he recognized the swagger and certain other marks characteristic of Roxy Hogan. He increased his pace to a quick trot, keeping to the shadows of the building, and, though he had on rubber-soled shoes and made very little noise as he ran, the man ahead somehow heard him coming and increased his own pace accordingly.

Hogan, for Mason was now certain that the man ahead was the man he sought, suddenly swerved and cut obliquely across the street toward the mouth of the "Channel," a thoroughfare notorious for being the abiding place of all manner of criminals from dips to yeggs. It was a dangerous place into which to hunt a man after dark, especially a man of Roxy Hogan's caliber, for there were many pitfalls and traps to be encountered. Besides, there existed a fraternity of fellowship among the denizens and they took up each other's quarrels as readily as they did their own.

But John Mason was there to get his man and he intended to get him if that were possible. He threw caution to the winds and put on a burst of speed, at the same time swinging into the street. He came to the mouth of the Channel just in time to see Hogan dive into an opening in the walls half-way down the street, which consisted of a single short block whose other end was blocked off by the rear wall of a warehouse.

The street was exceedingly narrow and evil-smelling, also sinister looking. It might have been an Indian pueblo, so close together were the houses, and it was into one of the few narrow passageways between the houses that Hogan had darted. A solitary incandescent bulb swinging from a pole gave the fiftful light by which the policeman saw his quarry disappear into the passageway.

Mason mentally marked the place and put on still more speed. To avoid waking the sleepers in the houses but a handbreadth on either side of him, he ran on his toes as lightly as a deer, for he knew that once the sleepers awakened and discovered him to be an officer of the law they would be down upon him like a pack of wolves. The "Channelers" hated the police as they did a plague, and only squads of police dared to go into the Channel after dark. Mason knew that he was taking his life into his hands in venturing into the Channel alone; he knew that, were he discovered, he would disappear as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed him, and nothing more would be heard of him.

Yet he never faltered. He went unflinchingly on, obsessed by an idea. Timid and cowardly he might have been on another occasion when Roxy Hogan had been his opponent; fearless and resolved was he now to regain his lost manhood and the prestige he had had before his disgrace. Better dead and out of it all than to live as he had been living during the past several weeks, with his own wife condemning him in her heart.

So, tight-lipped, fierce-eyed, determined to redeem himself at all costs, he went ahead. Perhaps it was the height of folly for him to dash into the narrow passageway between the two houses without a pause to reconnoiter, but the spirit of the chase was strong upon him and he could not do else than proceed.

He somehow felt that, should he pause, even for an instant, the courage in him would ebb out in a flash. Somewhere in the blackness ahead was Roxy Hogan, and Roxy Hogan would undoubtedly have his knife. A tremor passed through the policeman, but he put the thought from him.

In he went and raced along the passageway as though through a velvety black tunnel. In a moment he burst from the other end into what appeared to be a small courtyard. Buildings abutted it on all four sides, and there seemed to be no exit from it except through the house whose yard it was, or by the passageway through which he had entered. He was in a well, and, but for the star-stippled, purple-gray sky far above, it was dark as a black hat.

He was forced to a halt because of the very nature of the place. He suppressed his labored breathing as much as possible and stood intently listening, his body poised forward at the hips in readiness for sudden attack from any quarter. After a moment or so of intense silence he imagined he

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heard a noise coming from the region of the house. It was so slight a noise that he was not certain that it was a noise at all, but he instantly decided it was worth an investigation. Action. That was the antidote for the timidity and nervousness that surged just beneath the surface. To stand was to encourage fear; to move was to know no fear.

So he moved and was unafraid.

CROUCHING low, setting one foot before the other with cunning circumspection, his arms extended before him to ward off surprize, he advanced toward the rear wall of the house. After each step he paused momentarily to listen, his actions for all the world like those of a puma stalking its prey along a dark forest glade. He came to a door at last and pressed his ear against it. He heard nothing and groped for the knob and tried to open the door. It was fastened.

He left the door and moved stealthily across the face of the wall toward a dark square, half a dozen feet away, that indicated a window. It was a window, the glass panes of which had been broken out. From within came an odor that attaches itself to houses long vacant; it was a sour, musty smell that assailed his nostrils.

Simultaneously with the idea of examining the cellar door on which he then stood, came a muffled, almost noiseless, crashing and splintering of rotten boards and timbers, and John Mason's body shot down like a plummet into a yawning black hole.

He had no time to be startled by the abrupt change of his environment, for scarcely had he landed in a heap on the damp dirt floor of the cellar, after bumping down a short flight of steps, than he was pounced upon by a bulky object that hurled itself at him from the blackness beyond.

"You're a goner this time, you white-livered skunk!" a hoarse voice snarled at him.

It was the voice of Roxy Hogan. The next instant John Mason instinctively jerked himself to one side. Cold steel met his left shoulder and a shiver passed through him from head to foot. Somehow he caught a fleeting glimpse of a long-bladed knife hovering over him and, instead of jerking himself aside as he had before, he put his whole strength into an upward leap and managed to grip his adversary's body. The blade of the knife swished wickedly not two inches from his ear and he felt a sickening in the pit of his stomach.

With a heroic effort he resisted the impulse to tear himself away and run. By a lucky cast he succeeded in catching the hand that held the terrible knife. Wild horses couldn't have broken his grip on that hand after that. About the floor of the cellar the two men rolled and tossed, pitched and struggled, straining and heaving with every muscle. Roxy Hogan cursed gaspingly and tried to bring the point of his knife in contact with a vital spot on Mason's body, but the policeman was fighting silently and reserving his breath.

All of fifteen minutes they fought, rolling again and again into little puddles of stagnant water that dotted the slippery, damp floor, now on one side and now on the other, the policeman on top this moment and his opponent on top the next, never motionless for an instant. Hogan, by dint of surprizingly sudden lunges, managed a number of times to slash the policeman's body with his knife, and John Mason was put to it time and time again to fight back that almost overpowering impulse to release all holds and run for his life.

Eventually he got the strong fingers of one hand about Hogan's throat and squeezed until Hogan could curse no more. At the end of the fifteen minutes the policeman's uniform was a mass of rags and ribbons and he was bleeding profusely from a dozen gashes on various parts of his body. Also, at the end of that time Roxy Hogan's knife thrusts were getting less and less vicious and his breath was coming in weak long-drawn gasps and sucks. The fingers of the policeman were literally clawing the air from his enemy's throat.

Then, at length, Roxy Hogan's body went limp, as the policeman, concentrating all the strength that remained to him, tightened his throat-hold in a vast vise-like grip. Hogan wilted like a wet rag and his hot body sagged and sprawled in an ungainly fashion across John Mason. Mason lay panting for a long interval before he regained sufficient strength to push Hogan's unconscious body from him and stagger to his feet. Another interval he stood leaning for support against the wall of the cellar; then he stooped, picked up the limp form of Hogan and slung it over his shoulder.

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It was nightmare for the exhausted policeman to get up out of the cellar with his burden. When he reached the open air, however, he paused but a moment to suck in and gasp out great lungfuls of the cool night air before he made for the passageway leading out to the street, the senseless body of the gang leader draped like a bag of wheat over his shoulder.

Thus he stumbled along for eight weary blocks, the dripping of blood from his many wounds marking his path and sapping his strength, stopping frequently to rest, meeting no human being on the way.

Ay last he reeled into the third district police-station where the desk-sergeant stood issuing orders to half a dozen men gathered there. They all stared with blank amazement at John Mason's bloody face.

"Sergeant, I've brought Roxy Hogan in on the charge of mur——"

There John Mason ceased speaking for the very simple reason that he crumpled to the floor unconscious, the body of the still senseless Roxy Hogan bearing him down.

The next afternoon Policeman John Mason lay on his cot in the police hospital, his hurts neatly bandaged. Mollie, his wife, sat in a chair at one side of the cot. Jim Flynn stood on the other side. The chief of police, accompanied by Captain Weber of the third district, had just whispered good news into Mason's ear, shaken his hand and gone out.

"Well, Sergeant Mason," said Jim Flynn with a twinkle in his eyes, "you certainly cut the speck out of the apple that time."

Sergeant John Mason's eyes looked into the gleaming blue eyes of Mollie, his wife.

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Assisting Ananias

by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Precedents in Piperock," "Shepherds for Science," etc.

"CHUCK" WARNER is the biggest liar on earth. There may be liars who can figure out a whopper of a lie once in a while, and then lay back and let her go as she lies, but Chuck never lays back. No, sir. That *hombre* never lays down on the job.

Chuck has a Roman-nosed sort of a face, and a pair of "so-help-me-grandma" eyes that would bunco an angel. He's got a pair of flexible ears, like a burro, which he wiggles a heap when contemplating.

Me and Chuck and "Magpie" Simpkins sets on the top pole of a corral at the Cross J, while Magpie seems to dig deep-like into a sheet of newspaper. Magpie is so long that he can hook his spurs into the lower pole of that fence, and I can tell by the way his tired mustache seems to wiggle that he's interested.

"I'm ambitious," states Chuck. "I don't want to be no forty-a-month puncher all my life. That's the reason I consults you fellers. You've got to open the door when Opportunity shows up, ain't you?"

"Yeah," nods Magpie. "It's reasonable reasoning, Chuck. Where did you get this here paper?"

"Henderson's barber-shop. What do you think of her, Magpie?"

"Chuck—" Magpie backs against a post and crosses his long legs — "Chuck, you may be the realest liar in the West, but this here proposition will take something bigger than a danged lie. You can't walk right up to the door of that million-dollar teepee and say, 'Papa, look at your long lost Ashburton.'

"You've got to prove things, Chuck. You've got to show 'em the bullet-hole, as it were. They ain't going to hand you no ten million dollars just because you wiggles your ears at 'em and says, 'I'm him.' Them folks back there will hanker for something beside your word, Chuck."

"I reckon you're right, Magpie."

Chuck sighs deep-like and chaws on his chin-strap.

"It could be me, though. Ashburton is described as being small for his age and blue-eyed. He runs away to fight Injuns twenty years ago, and his folks wouldn't know him now. I left home about the same time, but it's a cinch my name wasn't De Puyster.

"But, Magpie, it's a big pot to play for, and a feller can't win unless he draws cards, can he? Think of ten million dollars! I figured her all out. At forty a month it would take me twenty thousand, eight hundred and thirty-three years and four months to amass that much, if I didn't spend a cent."

"Miserable outlook," agrees Magpie sympathetic-like. "What do you think, Ike?"

"He'd never amass that much," says I. "Chuck ain't steady enough. Let me see the paper."

Said paper was published somewhere on Sunday. One side of her tells the virtues of some kinda baking-powder that, according to the obituary, would raise big on two

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small pair; but on the other side is a whole page devoted to Ashburton De Puyster, the missing heir.

According to the legend, little Ashburton hopped the home corral when he was about twelve, and ain't peeped publicly since. Since he left home his pa has piled up shekels until he's lousy with wealth, and little Ashburton has about ten million coming when he gets back.

They've had detectives prowling around for years, but all they ever turned in was expense accounts. The deduction is that little Ashburton traileth around somewhere in the West, likely with a Injun tribe.

There's a big picture of a milk-fed baby in the middle of the page, and around it is a lot of pictures which shows little Ashburton living with a tribe of Injuns, which I don't *sabe* by their dress; and another shows him traveling alongside of the moon, setting on a travois, smoking a calumet pipe. I hands the paper back to Magpie.

"What do you think, Ike?" asks Chuck.

"Looks like a cross between Siwash, Piegans and Navaho," says I.

"Which is?"

"The Injuns he lives with."

"You're more observing than intelligent," opines Chuck. "I mean, what do you think my chances are to be little Ashburton De Puyster?"

"It's all right with me, but I'd advise caution, Chuck. That town is beyond the Dakota border, and any time you gets beyond that there's a heap of danger. I don't trust the United States after I gets beyond where they blaze trails."

Magpie sort of nods, and snaps his cigaret into the corral.

"Ike's right—for once," he observes. "She's a long shot, Chuck, but as you say, it's a hi-yu stake. A million is a lot of money."

"Ten million," corrects Chuck.

"Originally, Chuck. My idea is that you gets eight million and me and Ike split the other two. Eight is enough for you, ain't it?"

"Talk about it," says Chuck. "I want to know what I'm giving away all that money for."

"To get help to prove one of your danged lies. Come up to my cabin tonight, and we'll see what we can figure out."

Chuck wiggles his ears some more, and we all shakes hands. Me and Magpie gets our broncs and goes home, and then Magpie goes into a trance.

He sets down in a chair, puts his feet on a shelf and settles down on the back of his neck. From the restful attitude of him I'd say that his remote ancestors were bats.

I has to shoot twice under his chair to call him to supper, and he eats in silence. Along about dark Chuck rides up and comes in.

"How's the idea coming, Magpie?" he inquires.

"How much money you got, Chuck?"

"About two hundred I've saved for a rainy day."

"The wet season is at hand," proclaims Magpie. "It can't deluge much on two hundred, but it will make a little dampness. Me and Ike have got three broncs, six burros, which ought to be worth a little, and we've still got a few hundred left in the bank. Maybe we can rustle about a thousand between us to sweeten the pot; eh, Ike?"

"Deal me a hole-card, at least," says I. "She's a million-dollar stake, Ike."

"Uh-huh," says I. "I know, but I want to see what I've got to beat."

MAGPIE puts his feet back on the shelf, lights a cigaret and peers at the ceiling.

"Thusly she appears to old man Simpkins' favorite child: The De Puyster family wouldn't know Ashburton from one of Hank Padden's Seven-A calves, 'cause he's changed a heap in twenty years. They opines that little Ashburton hived up in the West.

"In reality, little Ashburton comes into cactus lands, and is captured by a fierce tribe of Injuns. Thereupon he becomes a blood-brother in the tribe, the same of which ranges beyond where the roads are cut out. He still clings to the family name, the same of which is uncommon. Later on he becomes tired of scalping and falls in with a old prospector.

"Comes a time when the call of blood whispers thusly, 'Go home and see what the old wickiup looks like.' Ashburton listens to the call like a coyote to the cackle of a hen, and then he decides to go East.

"He discloses the idea to his old chief and to the old prospector. They holds a council, and decides to sell a few feet of wampum and take the pilgrimage with him.

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"We ain't seen no paper. *Sabe?* We're innocent of all wrong. We've all got a part to play in the drama. See the idea?"

"What is my part?" I asks.

"You'll be the child's Injun papa, Ike—his adopted papa."

"Like —— I will. Me? A papa to Chuck Warner? Not any, thank you!"

"You will!" snaps Magpie. "You adopted him, and you can't renege."

"I did not!"

"You say you won't?"

Magpie drops his feet back on the floor, and squints at me.

"You say you won't, Ike?"

"Well," say I, "all I can say is this: I showed danged poor taste."

"I'm the old prospector," says Magpie. "I'll be knowed as—as—what would be a good name to call me?"

"I know," says I. "But it wouldn't never get into print. You couldn't pick a worse one than you've got."

"You'll be knowed as Black Hawk, Ike—chief of the Cactus tribe."

"Symbolic," says I, "'cause somebody is going to get stuck."

"I ought to have a Injun name," says Chuck. "Naturally I'd have one in the tribe."

"We'll call you Sa-in-Ana," says I. "Spell it backwards and make any translation you like."

Thus ended the council. Our livestock, saddles, ropes and so forth brought up two hundred and twenty-five dollars, and with what we've got in the bank brings the ante to a little over nine hundred. Piperock is naturally inquisitive as to our pilgrimage.

"Brazil," says Magpie. "I have cornered the nut supply of South America."

"And of Yaller Rock County, too, Magpie," admits "Buck" Masterson.

"Pshaw!" grins Magpie. "I'm taking these along for seed."

Piperock hated to see us go. When Art Miller managed to get his four stage horses under control I found a hole in my new hat, and Chuck had two buttons shot off his vest. Magpie and Art had sense enough to drop into the bottom of the stage until we're out of sight.

It sure is fine to have a send-off like that. They wouldn't hurt us for the world, but they lets their feelings get the best of them, and they forgets where they're shooting.

"Three tickets to Burlingame," says Magpie.

"Burlingame what?" asks the depot agent at Paradise.

"You got more than one?" asks Magpie.

"It's in Ohio," says Chuck, "I remember that much."

"Takes a good memory to know where you're going," says the feller, and then he proceeds to make out tickets which are as long as a Summer day in Yuma.

"Train leaves in an hour," says he.

"That gives us plenty of time," says Magpie as we went outside.

"Plenty of time to do what?" I asks.

"Get you shaved smooth, Ike. You never seen a Injun with whiskers."

And right then, for the first time in years and years, Ike Harper saw himself as he really is. After the shave is over Magpie and Chuck hurries me over to a vacant shack near the depot.

"For what?" I asks.

Magpie unties that war-sack and dumps the contents out on the ground. Shades of Sitting Bull! Magpie must have robbed seven tribes to get that bunch of garments. There's everything from a string of clam-shells to a bow and arrows. Then he produces a small can and a brush.

"What you got there? I asks, and he holds it before me.

The epitaph proclaims it to be Henry's Mahogany Stain—for interiors.

"I ain't dry, Magpie," says I. "Drink it yourself."

"You've got to be a Injun color, Ike," says Chuck, wiggling his ears. "We'll only run her down to your collar-bone and from your finger ends to your shoulders. We've got some danged nice-smelling stuff for your hair."

I don't blame that train for whistling. I stood there on the platform and watched her roll in, and I wouldn't blame that train if it had turned right around and went back.

"Look stoical like a Injun, Ike," says Magpie. "Don't grin."

"Grin ——!" says I. "I can't move my face. I'm beginning to set."

I've sure got some regalia, if you asks me. On my purple locks I've got a moth-eaten Piegan war-bonnet, and around my neck I've got three strings of clam-shells. I've got on a low-necked buckskin shirt that was made for a twenty-eight chest,

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and the sleeves only come half-way from my elbows to my wrists.

I've got on flannel panties, which were made from the rainbow, the seat of which was never included by the maker, forcing me to wear a blanket around my waist to hide the fact. The moccasins were made for a sixteen foot and have holes in the sole. I've got a stone pipe about three feet long, decorated with chicken feathers, and a bow and arrows.

We makes a break for the train as soon as she stops, but before we could climb aboard a conductor heads us off.

"Pullman?" he asks.

"Burlingame," says Magpie.

"Standard?" says he.

"Ohio," says Chuck.

"Are you going to ride in the sleeper?" he snorts mean-like.

"Oh, sure," says Magpie. "Let down the bars."

"Is the Indian one of your party?" he asks.

"This ain't no party," says Chuck. "This is business. He's with us."

"Smoking-car for him," says the conductor. "No Injuns in the Pullman. Abo-o-o-o-o-ard!"

They wouldn't let me in that car with Magpie and Chuck.

"Against the rules," says the conductor. "No argument. Smoking-car is five cars ahead."

"Papa, that's hard luck," says Chuck, looking at me sorrowful-like. "Your son feels that humiliation."

"You Indian too?" asks the conductor.

"My name is De Puyster!" snaps Chuck, and him and Magpie went inside.

"Can you understand English?" asks the conductor.

"No, I can't," says I. "Lot of things I can't understand, and one of 'em is this: Why can't I ride in a sleeping-car?"

"Against the rules for Indians to ride there."

"I wasn't born a Injun."

"I wasn't born a conductor either," says he. "But that wouldn't keep me from being throwed out if I got into a place where they didn't allow conductors."

"Some day," says I, "I'm going to have enough money to buy this road, and then I hope you strike me for a job."

"All right," says he. "I don't care a whoop who I work for."

I'VE got my money and ticket in my medicine-pouch, so I opens the door of that car, and starts off down the aisle. Everybody seems to get a heap interested in me.

That danged train seems to weave a heap, and I has a hard time hitting a straight trail. Pretty soon I has to grab the back of a seat.

A couple of ladies in the seat seem to get interested in my blanket, and one of 'em says:

"Marjorie, here is a real Indian! Just think of it!"

"How romantic!" gasps the other one, fingering my blanket. "Oh, I'd love to have that robe for my den. Sister Mary, did you ever see such gorgeous colors in your life?"

"Perhaps we can purchase it," says Mary. "The Indian has little idea of value, and we might get a bargain."

The train gives another roll, and I sets down with them.

"How much you take?" asks the sister Mary person, making sign-talk that nobody but herself could read. "You sellum blanket? You *sabe* trade?"

"Ma'am," says I, "I'll trade you even for a pair of pants."

Bang! I got a wallop right across the varnish, and it knocked my war-bonnet down over one eye.

"The idea!" shrieks one of 'em. "The idea!"

"Well," says I, "if you had on my clothes you'd see the idea different-like," and then I ambled out of there.

I didn't halt any more until I comes to a car where the smoke is thick. Then I sets down and arranges my bonnet. I'd say that sister Mary had some wallop, but she never busted the varnish crust, at that.

I've got a small bottle of hooch hid away inside of my seatless panties, and as soon as I gets settled I raises it to my lips.

"Here!" snaps a voice, and I gets yanked loose from my bottle. "No drinking on this train."

It's the conductor, and he glares at me like I'm something awful.

"Where did you get this liquor?" he asks. "Somebody give it to you?"

I'm so danged mad I can't answer.

"I'd like to catch the man who would sell whisky to an Indian," says he. "I'd fix 'im!"

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And he pokes off down the car out of sight.

I knowed a feller who was scalped by Injuns, and I used to feel sorry for him, but right now my sympathy goes out to the Injun who done the deed; he ought to have taken the feller's hide, too. They talk about the atrocities practised upon the whites by savage Injuns! Honest to grandma, I think the Injuns were too meek.

I didn't want to get into no fights, 'cause I felt that if anybody hit me anywhere between the dandruff and the collar-bone I'd crack just like shellac. That blamed mahogany stuff has set until I'm glazed all over the face, and I hope nothing funny happens.

I can't shut my eyes and can hardly open my mouth. I just sets there and thinks less of a million every minute. I'd give my share to be able to grin.

Along about dark Magpie and Chuck comes in.

"I asked 'em if they fed Injuns in the feed-car, but they said no," states Magpie. "So me and Chuck swiped something for you."

Chuck digs deep into his pocket, and then makes a fool face.

"Gee cripes! Here's what's left, Ike."

He holds out an awful-looking mess in one hand.

"Originally what?" I asks.

"Peach-pie."

"What did you bring, Magpie?" I asks.

"Knife and fork. I'd 'a' got a spoon, Ike, but the waiter was looking."

"Never mind," says I sweet-like. "The knife and fork will do. I suppose tonight you'll bring me a feather out of your pillow."

"Nope; we've got a scheme, Ike. Me and Chuck and you owns both tiers of that bunk. *Sabe?* We'll sleep down-stairs, and tonight when everybody is asleep, you sneak back there and crawl into the upper bunk. Nobody will know the difference."

"Yes," says I; "and one thing more: I want you to put that war-sack up there so I can get my own clothes. *Sabe?* I'm willing to be a Injun on land but not on a train."

"All right," agrees Chuck. "I reckon we can make a Injun out of you later on. We'll leave your clothes in the bunk. *Adiós.*"

Cometh night. The lights are turned low and the snores turned high. Big Chief Black Hawk looketh for a place to hold up. Big chief goes in single file down the narrow cañon. He'd have a —— of a time going in anything but single file down that train.

I thought that somebody reached out to shake hands with me, but after shaking hands with it I finds it's a foot. I'm halfway through the next car when a woman shoves her face out between the curtains and whispers hoarse-like—

"Good-night, honey!"

She looks right into my face, and subsides without a groan. Her hand flopped over the edge of the bunk, so I shook hands with her and put it back. I'll bet she felt of her scalp when she awoke.

I counted four cars and then began to count numbers until I found the right one. I didn't want to wake anybody up, but I'm no humming-bird. I've occupied one of them upper bunks before, and I'm wise to the fact that you need a ladder. I didn't have any ladder with me, and I sure didn't want to take no chances yelling for a partner, so I decided that I'd have to grow wings or hop high.

There's so much snoring going on that I figures a little more noise won't do any harm. I opens the curtains a little ways, walks back up the car, spits on my hands so my feet won't slip, and then I gallops right down the narrow aisle.

I FIGURED I could get a good run and then hop plumb inside. The idea was all right—like the trade I tried to make with my blanket.

I don't take more than three strides when into the other end of the car comes a female person. She's dressed in white, and her golden hair was hanging down her back.

It must 'a' been a shock to her to see a wild Injun galloping down the aisle toward her, 'cause she lets out a yelp like a lost soul, and started going back.

I say "started going back" 'cause she don't no more than get up a little speed when she meets that colored porter person. I hears a yell and a bump, and sees a pair of number seventeen soles in the air. Then I hears a agonized voice inquire:

"Law-w-w-w-dee! Law-w-w-w-w-dee! Whut's gwine on? Whut's gwine on?"

Black Hawk ain't passing out information. He leans back, takes a good aim,

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and it was a good shot—under the circumstances. I hops high and handsome, and twists into that bunk like a chip in a whirlpool.

Zowie! Somebody rolls over me. I gets a glimpse of a white nightgown, as the wearer sailed out where I sailed in, and I hears feetsteps going away down the car.

"——!" says I, peering out. "I must 'a' picked the wrong nest."

"Ike!" I hears Magpie whisper. "Where are you?"

"Don't ask fool questions!" I snaps. "Where are you?"

I hears several voices raised in argument, and the porter is telling about a "ghos' whut come along." I peers out again, and across the aisle is Chuck and Magpie peering out. I slithers out and dives in with them.

"You got into the wrong place, Ike," says Magpie.

"You certainly do catch on to things quick, Magpie," I replies, and then we pulls the curtains and snores industrious-like, 'cause a investigating committee is with us. They sure talked a lot.

"Injun?" asks the conductor. "I know him. We'll search the train and put him off. I think he's crazy. I took a bottle of whisky away from him today."

"He's either drunk or crazy," says another voice.

"He's crazy," snores Chuck. "I hope they don't smell the varnish."

They searched every vacant berth in the train, but they didn't find the Injun. I'd as soon be discovered as to try and sleep three in a bunk. 'Long about morning I crawled out, and Chuck boosted me into the upper bunk, and when morning came Ike Harper was himself, with the exception of an artificial poker-face.

There was a new conductor on the train and he didn't pay any attention to me. He told Magpie that a Injun had jumped off the Overland last night, and that they were looking for the body.

I couldn't get that varnish off. I scrubbed until my face is fairer than the beetlets of the fields, but she clings fast. I got enough cracked loose so I can carry on a conversation and wink one eye.

It is thus that we arrive at Burlingame. By that time the whiskers on my face has all decided that there ain't no use trying to come out, so they all starts back in again. A barber got some varnish remover and cleaned me up pretty well, and then Chuck and Magpie opine that I've got to turn aboriginal again.

I backs into a corner and hauls my gun. I vetoes varnish now and evermore, but Magpie has some brown dye which won't make me stiff in the face. It was hi-yu stuff, but it turned purple on the face in spots, which made me look like I'd had a awful fight lately; and when they gets me back into my regalia, all I need is to be hit in the face with a loose egg to be a Indian Summer sunset.

They fixes me all up in a old lodging-house, and then we pilgrims straight for a prominent place to hang out, where the inquisitive may look upon us. Burlingame ain't what I'd call a happy place to live in. There ain't a kid or a dog in sight, and the inhabitants seem to ride behind closed doors, reserved-like. A policeman stops us and seems interested.

"Got a license?" he snaps.

"Dog, marriage or liquor?" asks Magpie.

"Medicine."

"We ain't sick," says Chuck.

He looks us over mean-like, and asks—

"Where's your outfit?"

"Cross J," says Chuck. "Yaller Rock County, Montana."

"Yeah?" says he mean-like. "Well, don't try peddling any Injun pills around here. See? You fellers better hit something smaller than Burlingame. Get me?"

I expected it of Magpie Simpkins. He's the suddenest person on earth, and I'm here to bet that when the policeman woke up he knowed he'd been hit. We propped him up against a lamp-post and put his hat over his eyes to shade his nose from the sun.

"You'll get us in trouble, Magpie," says I.

"He said to hit something, didn't he?" asks Magpie. "Didn't he say, 'Get me'? Well, I got him. He talked too much."

Pretty soon a feller comes along with one of them automobiles with windows, and pulls up beside of us.

"Want to ride?" he asks.

"Well," says Magpie, "I'd tell a man."

We all climbed in and sets down on them spongy seats.

"Where to?" he asks.

"Any place you've got," says Magpie. "We're strangers. I'm Magpie Simpkins,

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a old prospector. This thirty-two-year-old with the odd face is Ashburton De Puyster, in spite of it, and this old Cactus aborigine is Black Hawk, an ex-scalper. Any old place you takes us will suit us finer than frog-hair."

"I was borned here," says Chuck. "Town has changed in twenty years."

THAT feller took us every place. We sure enjoyed that ride. Pretty soon I gets interested in a clock-like dingus on the side of the machine.

"That shows how far we've traveled," says Magpie wise-like.

"Maybe you're right," says I, "but that's the first one I ever seen that shows distance in dollars instead of miles."

The feller sees us looking at it, so he turns.

"What kind of a way is that to show distance?" yells Magpie, and the car stops. "Have we rode thirty-two dollars?"

"That shows what you owe me," says he, explaining-like.

"Oh," says Magpie, "it does? Well, well! Now what you ought to have is another one what will show you what we're going to pay you."

"What do you mean?" he asks.

"You heard me talking, *hombre!* You invites us to ride, and then you turns the clock on us, eh? You opines we're easy, I reckon. How does you turn them dollars back?"

"What do you mean?"

"It didn't show anything when we got in, did it?"

"No, but——"

"Unwind it!" snaps Magpie, and shoves a gun into the feller's ribs.

He turned her back.

"Fix her so she don't add any more," orders Magpie. "Now you may take us back where you picked us up, and the first nickel that thing shows means a bullet in your nervous system. *Sabe?*"

Gee cripes, but he was sore. I wanted to give him a quarter, but Magpie said there was nothing doing. It was worth that much, anyway, so I left it on the seat, but Chuck picked it up as he came out behind me.

He took our telescope and war-sack and pilgrimed to a hotel. Man, I'd stand up and announce that it was some hotel. There was a lot of folks in there, and they sure gave us an optical assay as we came in. From the way they stared I'd opine that strangers are fewer in that hotel than they are in Sam Holt's place in Piperock.

A feller in a band uniform tries to take our baggage away from us, but we managed to hang on to it.

"You tell the boss we want to sleep here," says Magpie, and the feller leads us up to a big counter where a slick-haired *hombre* stares at us.

"You the boss?" asks Magpie, and the feller fusses with his collar.

"*¿Habla español?*" asks Chuck, wiggling his ear.

"*Kumtuks Chinook?*" I asks, but he remains dumb.

"——!" snorts Magpie helpless-like. "That's all the languages we know. Give him the Piegan sleep sign, Black Hawk."

"You—you want a—a room?" he stammers.

"You deals in 'em, don't you?" asks Magpie.

"Yes, we—er——"

"Big enough for three," says Magpie. "We're all together."

"Detached for three will be twenty-five dollars a day," says he. "With bath, thirty-five."

"My gosh!" gasps Chuck. "It costs to get dirty in this village. Is there a horse-trough where we can wash our hands?"

The feller hands Magpie a pen.

"I'll register for all of us," says Magpie, and just about that time another wise-looking *hombre* saunters up behind the counter and looks at what Magpie writes.

"I—er—really don't know about the Indian," says he, "I—er— Which one of you is Ashburton De Puyster?" he asks quick-like.

"I'm him," says Chuck. "Guts, feathers and all. Who wants to know?"

"Well, well!" says he, peering at Chuck. "Well, well!"

"Baths ought to be cheaper with so many wells coming in," grins Chuck.

The two behind the counter seems to talk in sign language, and then out comes two little jaspers, dressed like mounted policemen on parade, to show us where to hive up. Man, we got into a palace, if you asks me. We sets down and contemplates things, and Magpie observes:

"If we stay here I'm going to trade that

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war-sack for a red trunk. It looks like —— in here."

We sets there and smokes a while, and all to once comes a knock at the door. We all yelps a welcome, and in comes two more slick lookers.

"I'm from the *Ledger*," says the tallest one. "I would like to interview Mr. De Puyster."

"Hop to it," grins Chuck, and the other feller gets busy setting up a three-legged affair, which we decipher to be a photygraph outfit.

"We want first of all to know how you happened to come here?" says the feller. "Of course you know the detectives have been searching for you for years, don't you?"

"What for?" asks Chuck.

"You know, don't you?"

"I've been too busy killing Injuns to do much reading," says Chuck, and the feller gets busy writing in a little book.

"How long have you been in the West? Do you remember your parents? Why did you run away? Have you been successful in the West? Are you going to live here? I want to know everything you can tell me."

He shoots the questions at Chuck so fast that all he can do is suck on his cigaret and wiggle his ears.

"Twenty years—no—walking was too slow—I'm still alive—I hope not—you'd never believe me if I did," answers Chuck slow-like, and the feller puts down all the answers.

We're all setting on the sofy, and the photograph feller announces that he's all ready.

"We'll talk after the picture," says the feller. "All ready?"

Bang! comes a flash and a report, like a shotgun shell with loose wads, and I loses my eyesight.

Bang! goes a gun beside me, and I slid off the sofy and crawled underneath. I waits a minute and then I crawls out the back and peers over.

There is that photygraft thing all doubled up among its spindling legs, and a bullet seems to have hit it square in the eye. Magpie is backed up against a door across the room, and Chuck is setting on the floor with his back against the sofy, and in his hands is his big Colt .45, from which smoke is still drifting.

"Quick work, Chuck," applauds Magpie. "My gun stuck. Was it a bomb?"

"Where did you go, Ike?" asks Chuck.

"Holed up immediate and soon," says I. "Bow and arrow is too slow."

Comes a gentle tap at the door, and Magpie yanks his gun.

"Come in!" he yelps.

THE door opens and the head of the boss shows up. Behind him is two more fellers, who peer in careful-like. The boss seems to have trouble with his speech, and his fingers fuss with his vest pockets.

"Quit that!" yells Chuck. "Hands away from that vest pocket! Dog-gone me if anybody is going to slip a derringer on me!"

"I—I—we—assure you I— What seems to be wrong, gentlemen?" he asks.

"One slick-ear tried to probe my past while his pal dynamites us," says Chuck, fingering his gun. "But neither took so you'd notice it."

"Pshaw!" says one of them. "It must have been the flash-light."

"Meaning which?" asks Magpie.

"A charge of illuminating-powder exploded to sufficiently register the image on a sensitized photograph negative."

"My ——!" grunts Magpie. "I thought that Noah Webster was dead!"

"Well," says the boss, "I'm sorry it happened, but I guess it—er— Well, nobody was hurt, so it's all right."

He picked up the busted outfit, and they all goes out.

"What's the next move?" asks Chuck. "Do I go out and ask for that money now?"

"Chuck—" Magpie puts his feet on the table, and gets down on the back of his neck in the chair— "Chuck, you're a natural-born hold-up. You ain't got a gentle thought in your head. You let me think it out."

"Think fast," says Chuck. "This wicki-up is costing us a dollar an hour. *Sabe?* One stack of whites every time the clock strikes."

We sets there and smokes a while, and then comes another knock. Magpie puts his gun beside him and yells for the knocker to come in.

The door opens, and there it stands. He's a skinny little *hombre*, with bunches of gray hair hanging to his cheek-bones, and he's wearing a pair of specs that make

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him look like the granddaddy of he-owls. He's dressed so slick that a fly would skid if it lit on him. He's got a voice like "Scenery" Sims, and walks like a sage-hen with a cactus in its hip.

"Ah!" says he, rubbing his hands. "I am looking for the gentleman who calls himself Ashburton De Puyster."

"Gee cripes!" wails Chuck. "They've had de-tectives on my trail for twenty years, and now they're using bug-hunters! Mister, I give up. Welcome to our brier-patch."

"You are he?"

"In spite of —— and high water," admits Chuck. "Set down."

"Ah!" says he, and parts the rear of his coat before he sets down.

"I am Willis Van Tweed," says he.

"Well," says Chuck when there don't seem to be any applause, "you know best."

"I am attorney for Milton De Puyster," says he. "I have—er—been informed that you arrived today, and in order that there might be no mistakes I—er—you understand that this is a delicate proposition to—er——"

He rubs his nose and looks around.

"What proof have you to offer?"

"Of what?" asks Chuck.

"That you are named Ashburton De Puyster."

"Them two," says Chuck, pointing at me and Magpie. "That old coot is a prospector who has knowed me ever since the Sentinel Butte was a hole in the ground, and the old Injun was the one what stole me."

"I see," says he. "Go on."

"I'm through," says Chuck. "Take me or leave me."

"Remarkable!" says he, and then he turns to Magpie.

"What do you know about him?" he asks.

"Well," says Magpie, deliberate-like, "I first met him in 1890. He was punching cows for the Lazy Y outfit."

"That was twenty years ago," nods the old coot. "Was he a—er—capable man?"

"Old hand," nods Magpie.

"Was he known as Ashburton De Puyster at that time?"

"Yeah. Long before that. I heard of the name five or six years before that. Jack Davis told me about a roper they had at the Circle C ranch about seven years before whose name was Ash——"

"My ——!" yelped Chuck. "Wait, Magpie! You must 'a' got the calendar mixed. Remember I'm only thirty-two now."

Magpie twists his mustache and squints at the ceiling.

"Does the Indian talk English?" asks the lawyer.

"Intermittently," says Chuck. "He's got to like you or he won't."

"Do you like me?" he asks.

"Well," says I, "you get danged personal at first sight."

"Have you knowed Ashburton De Puyster very long?"

"I stole him when he was twelve."

"From whom?"

"From whom?" I asks. "Whom was it, Ashburton?"

"I was too young to know," says Chuck sad-like. "Don't you know?"

"Too long to remember," says I.

"About how long?" asks Van Tweed.

"Well," says I, "as far as I can remember it was about thirty years ago. I ain't been on the war-path for twenty-nine years, and that was quite a while before I swore off."

"It is quite evident that you didn't agree on a story," says Willie. "And your testimony doesn't match to any extent."

"I'm him!" snaps Chuck. "These two old ignorant pelicans don't know the Civil War is over, and wouldn't tell the truth if they did."

"Well, I'm afraid you'll have to present stronger proofs than this before you have a case," says he. "I bid you good afternoon."

"Whoa!" says Magpie soft-like, and Willie Van Tweed looked, likely for the first time in his life, into the muzzle of a Colt .45.

"Set down," urges Magpie. "You ain't stayed long enough to be convinced. I wonder if there is any way to get a little drink. There's one of them telephones over there on the wall."

"Not me," says Chuck. "I don't *sabe* 'em."

I've seen 'em used, so I imitates.

"Office," says a mocking-bird.

"Let me *wau-wau* with the bartender," says I.

"Oh!" says she, and then I can hear somebody laughing.

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Then she says—

"What do you wish?"

"If I get what I wish for," says I, "I'd wish for a whole case of whisky instead of a bottle."

"Anything else?"

"Corkscrew," says I, and hung the thing back on the hook.

"I—I beg your pardon, but I've an appointment, and my—er—time is valuable," says Willie nervous-like.

"So is ours—dollar an hour," says Chuck. "Stick for the dampness."

"I really must go," he squeaks. "This is—er—really, I wish you'd lower that gun."

COMES a knock at the door, and when we yells for 'em to come ahead the door opens and in comes two fellers carrying a box. One of 'em hands Magpie a paper and pencil, and another lays a corkscrew on the table.

"Just sign it, sir," says the feller.

Magpie wrote something on the paper, and then turns to me.

"My gosh!" says he. "You must be dry, Ike. Seventy-two dollars' worth of hooch. I hope you're satisfied."

"I expect to be," says I, and then I procured four water-glasses. I measured out man-sized drinks, and handed one to Willie. He looks at it and shudders.

"Not any, thanks. My physician forbids it."

"He diagnosed you wrong," says Magpie. "Here's a toast:

"Here's hoping your cinch never busts.
Here's hoping your guns never rust.
May you die in your shoes
With your skin full of booze
Far away from the alkali dust.

"We're all going to drink," says Magpie. "All of us. *Sabe?*"

When Magpie speaks like that the present company usually obeys. That long, lean, tired-looking *hombre* has a impressive way about him.

Willie choked to death three times over that drink. Chuck bounced him up and down in the chair a few times, and he's as good as new. He takes a few deep breaths and picks up his cane.

"Not yet!" yells Chuck. "Gosh, man, this party is just starting. Fill 'em up, Black Hawk, and we'll drink another toast. All set?

"Here's to the land of chaps and quirt,
Where you may get killed but never hurt;
Where men wear hair on their pants and head,
And don't die off till they're killed plumb dead."

"Ha, ha, ha!" explodes Willie, and takes his without a murmur.

We sets there for a minute and looks at Willie. He puffs like he had been in a race, and wipes the tears out of his eyes.

"Ah-h-h-h!" says he, and then he kicks his cane off the table. "That's good! Ha, ha, ha! Hair on their trousers, eh? Ha, ha, ha! Don't hurt, eh? Fillum up again. I know a—ha, ha, ha—good one:

"Here's to the dodo, a beautiful bird,
Who sits all the time and don't say a word.
Never worried or argued or fussed in its life;
Wish I owned a dodo instead of a wife.

"Ha, ha, ha! My wife's a dodo with the reverse English. Ha, ha, ha! Sorry I didn't meet you gentlemen sooner."

"Couldn't," grins Chuck. "Didn't have the road cut out. Think there's any question about me being who I am?"

"Not any—nossir. I've sheen your picture when you was a baby, and you haven't changed a bit. Could you—ha, ha, ha—wiggle your ears in infancy?"

"Nope. At that time the wiggle was all in my toes, but I got rheumatism in 'em from damp war-paths, and the wiggle went to my ears."

"Ha, ha, ha! Anybody know any more toasts?"

"Whoa!" says Magpie awed-like. "You're going to get your wheels off the grade if you don't haw a little. You've had two half-pint drinks already."

"What will your wife think?" asks Chuck.

"Wife?"

Willie sticks his nose into the air and whistles.

"Pshaw! What do I care what she thinks? Nossir. It's what she says and does before she thinks. No judgment."

"Looking at you, Willie, I'd say you told the truth," opines Magpie.

"The question is: When do I collect?" says Chuck. "I need the money."

"We'll go up there now," says Willie. "Father and mother are gran' ol' couple, but skeptical. Oh, awful skeptical. Don't know you're in town. Editor of *Ledger* called me up and told me about it. Mus' thank him. Anybody know any more toasts?"

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We had one more, and then I lost all my arrows on the way down. The number on our room was something over twelve hundred, and I reckon they numbers the rooms according to the number of steps it takes to get up to 'em.

I fell down steps until I figures that my future is going to be one continuous descent. Me and Willie runs a dead heat, but he got on the rail and slid the last fifty feet, and we entered that multitude all in a heap. There wasn't any applause, I'd tell a man.

My buckskin shirt is split all the way up the back, and Willie's pants-legs are split all the way up the sides. He's got his hard hat jammed down over his nose, and half of his collar rears up the back of his neck.

Magpie and Chuck bumps down the last flight and joins us.

"Ah-h-h-h!" says Willie. "We should have taken the lift."

"Holy hen-hawks!" wails Chuck. "Wasn't we high enough to suit you?"

"Mister Van Tweed, I'm—er—sorry—I— What seems to be wrong?" stutters the boss of the place.

We squints around, and finds that we're the center of an inquisitive herd of folks.

"Tha's all ri'," squeaks Willie. "Ha, ha, ha! Here's where men wear hair on their pants. Whee-e-e-e! Tha's all right; nobody got hurt."

"Ain't he a regular ring-tailed cross between a wolf and a whangdoodle?" asks Magpie admiringly, but the crowd don't applaud.

"Willis Van Tweed!" shrieks a woman's voice, and a decorated female busts into our midst. She's got more sparklers on than "Faro" Fannie ever seen, and she stands there peering at Willie through a pair of specs on a handle.

"Woman," says Willie dignified-like, "there is nothing wrong. I'm a cross between a whang and a wolfdoodle. May you die in your shoes with your shoes full of—er— Let's go; eh? What shay?"

The woman sets down hard on the sofy and drops her specs on the floor, but Willie don't pay no attention and the three of us follers him out of the front door. There's a automobile standing near the door, and on the sidewalk is a policeman, who salutes Willie.

"TAXI," says Willie. "We would ride."

"Got protection," says Chuck as we rolls away. "Policeman riding with the driver."

"Yep," says Magpie. "And he ain't doing it to save his hoofs, either."

The machine seems to sort of slow down, and then Magpie pulls his gun, knocks out the little window on his side and shoves his gun into the policeman's back.

"Straight ahead!" snaps Magpie. "We'll tell you when to stop."

"What's the idea?" asks Chuck.

"Police station to the right," says Magpie. "This is that anti-medicine policeman and that thirty-two-dollar hack we rode in this morning."

"So?" says Chuck, wiggling his ears.

He knocks out the window on his side, and almost punched the driver off the seat with his gun. Then we sure had some ride. We went plumb out to where the moon shone on meadows bright and clear, and then we makes 'em stop.

The clock said it was fifteen-fifty, but time didn't bother us. We set the driver and policeman on the fence in the moonlight, and then we all has another shot out of the bottle Chuck brought along. Them two on the fence objects, but their objection ain't sustained by the four judges.

Willie wanted to throw a rock at 'em, but Chuck took the rock away from him.

"I'll drive," says Magpie. "I drove Scenery Sims' machine once."

"I'd admire to walk then," says I. "I rode with you that time."

Willie went to sleep during the argument, so we dumped him inside and climbed aboard.

"If you bust up that hack you'll pay well for it," says the driver.

"If we live," says Magpie. "I reckon this is the same thing as taking a gun away from a burglar, so my conscience don't pain me none."

"Give her room," says Chuck. "I can ride anything you can drive."

He had a chance to prove it. It was all right as long as we had a straight road, but Magpie ain't there when it comes to cutting them curves.

We lopes along for a few miles, and then we hits a down grade. That benzine bronc begins to gallop wild and free, sort of cavorting from one side to the other, and then cometh a curve.

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Something seems to yank the road out from under us, and we went regardless. When we hit the road again there ain't no top left on the hack, I've got a portion of picket fence around my neck and Chuck is reared back against the seat with a rooster in his hands.

Willie has lost his hat, and from the smell around there I'd say that we hit a setting of eggs that had lasted about halfway to the little chickens.

"Anybody pull leather yet?" yells Magpie.

"Hit 'em again!" yells Chuck. "Hit another hennery and we'll have enough to pull off a cock-fight!"

That hack seems to limp a heap like she'd lost her wind, but we got her to rolling good again, and when we came to the next curve Magpie tried to make it, but the blasted thing changed ends on a wet spot and we stopped with our tail-gate against a tree.

Across the street from us is a big house, lit up like a church, and when Willie sees it he shakes his head a few times and squeaks:

"Tha's the place. Tha's your home, Ashburton. Welcome home."

"You're welcome," says Chuck, standing up.

He takes off his hat and bows low.

"Ten million, I greets you."

"I've got a good idea," says Magpie. "Let Chuck go in alone and give 'em a real surprize."

"Shuppose they don' recognize him?" argues Willie.

"He can talk, can't he?" I asks. "He was lost—not dumb."

Chuck went. From where we sets we can see the door open, and pretty soon Chuck comes walking back, falling over flower-beds and talking to himself.

"Get the money?" I asks.

"Naw-w-w! Wrong place. Willie must be drunk."

"Nossir," says Willie. "Tha's ri' place—betcha. What happened?"

"I knocked at the door," says Chuck sad-like. "Man came to door. I says, 'Papa, I've come home to die,' and I grabbed him around the neck."

"Kiss him?" I asks.

"Uh-huh."

"Then what?" asks Magpie.

"He hit me in the neck and knocked me among the flowers. Said his name was Butler."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howls Willie. "You ki-kissed Perkins."

"——!" snorts Chuck. "You know too many names, Willie. I'm through. I may have ten millions coming, but I don't want it that bad. Cripes, that *hombre* bent me all up."

"Aw ——!" grunts Magpie. "You're too rough, Chuck. You better quit kissing strangers. We'll all go in, and I'll do the talking. *Sabe?*"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckles Willie. "Kissing Per——"

"E-nough!" howls Chuck. "Shut up or I'll kiss you—you shrimp!"

A big *hombre* opens the door and scowls at us.

"Perkins," says Willie dignified-like, "announce me to the De Puysters; I will vouch for my friends."

"Very good, sir," says he. "There's a reception going on, sir."

"The more the merrier, Perkins."

We all walks in on a noiseless carpet, and I hears somebody playing on a piano.

"Mister Willis Van Tweed and friends," announces Perkins, and we all pilgrims into a big room full of folks.

The light is so bright that we can't see much, but I deciphers the female that yelped at Willie in the hotel. She slides right up and grabs him by the arm.

"Willis Van Tweed—you!" she wails low-like and folks look uncomfortable.

"What is the meaning of this?" asks a big *hombre*, who is wearing a shirt-front three feet across. "Who are these people?"

I LOOKS around for Willie, and I gets a glimpse of his busted pant-legs going up-stairs beside the exasperated lady.

"I'm a old prospector," says Magpie humble-like. "The buck Injun is old Black Hawk, chief of the long extinct Cactus tribe, and that wiggle-eared *hombre* over there is your lost son, Ashburton."

"Queer," says the feller, turning red, "but I never was married."

"My ——!" explodes Chuck. "What will the neighbors say?"

"I am De Puyster," states a bald-headed little coot about the same size as Willie, coming to the front. "Who did you say——"

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"Papa, don't you know me?" asks Chuck. "I am your little son."

A hard-faced lady seems to appear out of the main herd, and she peers at Chuck and then at the De Puyster person.

"You say— Who are you?" she asks, and her voice is tuned thin.

"The son of Milton De Puyster," says Chuck weary-like.

"My dear," says the little feller weak-like, "there's some mistake. I—I never had a son; I swear it."

Me and Chuck and Magpie looks foolish-like at each other.

"You—you say he's your father?" asks the lady.

"Yes'm. I wouldn't lie to you."

"Is—that—your—father?" she asks deliberate-like, pointing at De Puyster.

"As natural as a flea on a pup," states Chuck. "Older—that's all."

That assemblage grows as quiet as a graveyard. Then from the top of the stairs comes:

"Here's hoping your cinch never busts.
Far away from the alkali dust.
Where hair grows on your pants,
And you're dead when you die.
Wish I had a dodo insead of a wife. Amen."

"Amen," says Magpie pious-like.

"It—it must be a joke," quavers De Puyster. "It— I don't like it."

"But directions says take it," says Chuck.

Crash! We hears glassware hit the floor.

"Heavens!" wails somebody. "He fell all the way down into the punch!"

Here comes Willie, pant-legs flapping and golden liquor is running off his whiskers. He don't see nobody, Willie don't. He points straight for the front door and disappears.

"I don't know what to think," says somebody awed-like. "Van Tweed of all persons on earth! Appearing in such a state and——"

Comes a lot of voices at the door, and we turns to see two policemen coming in, half-dragging poor Willie, who is protesting loud-like.

"What—what does this mean?" asks De Puyster.

"Stole a taxicab," pants the officer. "Assaulted an officer. There were three— Ah, there you are!" he whoops when he sees us. "We've been looking for you three."

He starts for Magpie, who is backed up against the wall, right under a big picture. I expects Magpie to pull a gun, but he don't.

He puts up both hands meek-like, and takes hold of the two corners of that frame, and before the policeman knows what the game is he gets crowned plentiful. It knocks him flat, and there he sets with his head through the canvas, and Magpie stands with both feet on the frame.

The other policeman yanks something out of his pocket, and the next second the whistle blew.

I didn't know there was that many policemen in the world. They comes into that front door in a group, and every one has got a club in his hand.

"Pow-w-w-w-w-der Ri-i-i-i-i-i-ver!" yells Magpie, and shoots at the lights.

Man, I'd say there was something doing. Some wise man must 'a' knowed wnat to do in a case like that, 'cause the lights went out. I gets hit in the neck and knocked under a table, and when I comes out the other side I grabs somebody by the neck and started to waltz.

"Ike!" hisses Magpie. "Let go my neck and take Willie by the feet!"

I reached down and grabbed a pair of limp legs, and follered Magpie. He sure knowed where to go. We bumped into a lot of folks, but kept on going until we hit the open. Chuck is right behind us. We trots across the yard, bumps into a fence and all fell down.

"Help boost him over the fence," says Magpie.

The three of us swings the supine body over the top, and then climbs after it.

"Couldn't let the police get the poor little devil," pants Magpie. "Wish he could walk a little."

Our little friend seems to get action back into his legs, and we went faster. We skids across a street, got our bearings by a engine-whistle, and pointed straight for a railroad yards. We crawled under a fence and pulled Willie after us.

There stands a freight-train with an engine on the west end, so we boosts our pal into a empty box-car and crawls in after him. As we shut the door the train moves out of Burlingame.

"I hung on to the bottle," pants Chuck, and hands it to me in the dark.

"Good," says I. "We'll drink a toast to Willie Van Tweed; eh, Willie?"

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"I—am—not—Willie—Van—Tweed," says he slow-like. "I—am—Milton—De—Puyster—and I want to get off!"

"My ——!" howls Chuck. "Magpie, you swiped my papa."

"There's a—a—mistake," wails the little feller. "I—I never had a son—I swear it."

We sets there for a while and listens to the wheels rattle over the switches, and then Magpie says:

"Maybe it's our mistake, old-timer. We thought the De Puyster family lost a son."

"Oh!" says he. "I—I see. That newspaper story. They supposed his name was De Puyster—but I never had a son—I swear it. My wife was a widow when I married her, and it was her son we were looking for. I never had a son—I swear it."

The train jolts to a stop, and we peers out.

"I wish to get off," says De Puyster. "I—I must go home."

"Go ahead," says Magpie. "You're free as the air. Give our regards to Willie, and tell him we meant well."

"I will," says he. "I swear it. Good-by."

He dropped out of the door just as the train jerked ahead.

"Say!" yelled Chuck. "What was your wife's name?"

"Warner," he yelled back. "Elizabeth Warner."

The train crossed a switch and pilgrimed West.

"Holy horned toads!" wailed Chuck. "Holy Mariar! Why didn't I use my own name? Why, I'd 'a' got that ten million!"

"I hate a lie," says Magpie serious-like. "Honest I do. Look what a lie does; it loses me a million and makes you a orphan, Chuck."

"Orphan ——!" I yelps. "That's nothing! It made a Injun out of me! A dog-gone shirtless Injun!"

"From now on," says Chuck, "I'm going to tell the truth."

"Me, too," says Magpie. "How about you, Ike?"

"I'm with you," says I. "One more lie won't hurt us any."

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Wild Blood

A Four-Part Story

Part Two

by Gordon Young

Author of "Savages," "A Dead Man's Tale," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

THREE men were in the shanty bar—the black-bearded Englishman who called himself Davenant; my leader, "Douglas Moore;" and myself. The Englishman said that he wanted us to raise a crew, steal away in a ship he claimed title to, and raid a pearl-bed on old Grahame's island of Dakaru.

"When the voyage is over I shall make you a present of the ship," Davenant said.

Something wrong there! Precious lot of pearls one would have to scoop up to pay for a ninety-ton vessel.

At any rate, "Moore" made his proposition—full command and twelve hundred pounds cash—and Davenant accepted it.

"Get me a crew," said "Moore" to me abruptly.

I got him one with the help of Burly Ben Hawkins.

Hawkins was a wicked, slothful giant, and I loved him as a brother. The means we used to get the men were not legal; but this was the 70's with Australia full of criminals, and almost anything could be done.

The only real sailor in the whole crew was little Raikes. He was a tattler. He recognized "Moore" as "Hurricane" Williams, and me as Dan McGuire; and later, when safe at sea, we admitted it. He asserted, too, that he had picked up a secret between Davenant and the woman Davenant called his daughter—Dula, Raikes said her name was.

A strange, silent woman, that. She couldn't keep her eyes off "Moore"—or Williams, to give him his proper name now. I think she was in love with him. I know that I was in love with her.

Well, we overpowered the caretakers whom rival claimants had put in charge of the ship Davenant said he owned. At midnight our pressed crew warped her out to sea.

Trouble started right away. Food ran short; tremendous storms racked us; and Williams drove us all till we were but walking dead men, too tired and hopeless even to mutter.

He, too, had his reasons for reaching Grahame on the island of Dakaru. He hated Grahame, I knew that—or thought it.

Then came a sinister night. Just to see what Dula would do, I dissembled my devotion to Williams.

"I hate a traitor!" she cried in anger.

Just then the wind blew back her cloak, and I caught a glimpse of a knife in her hand. Only a few hours later Tom Gibson, a seaman, was killed—knifed.

In the dark he was of about the same general bulk as Raikes and I; and he was wearing Raikes's shirt when he met his end. Apparently some one was trying to murder either Raikes, because he knew the Davenants' secret, or myself, because I had made an enemy of Dula.

That was too much for me. I sneaked into Williams's cabin, stole a bottle of gin and—this is the truth!—drank it at one drink. Aside from Burly Ben Hawkins, who drank to drown the memory of a woman he had jilted in San Francisco, I was the only man aboard who could put down square-face like that.

Then, drunk, I knocked at Dula's door.

I bowed low and said:

"You made a triflin' mistake this evening. It was not I you tripped hellward. I just thought I'd let you know, so you wouldn't scream in the morning light—takin' me for a ghost. Good night."

I bowed again.

Looking up, I saw two gleaming eyes and nothing more. I heard, "Come in here," and nothing more. Had I been sober I wouldn't have gone. Had I been sober I would never have knocked.

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THERE was scarcely room for the two of us to sit down. She did not sit for a time; how long a time I can't say. I put down the lid of a chest, filled with various feminine things, colored and soft-textured, folded neatly, and sat on it.

I leaned against the bulkhead and looked at her, perhaps with something of light, triumphant amusement on a stupid face—my own. I was not drunk, at least not in the full sense of that ambiguous word that means anything between high spirit and a sodden body; but I was well across the border into an exalted carelessness, indifference.

I was but returned to a certain normal state, one from which I would never have departed willingly. The world could go smash itself against the sun, and I would have ridden along jeeringly, my tongue loose at both ends.

Dutch courage? No, not courage at all; for whatever virtues I have had, drunk or sober, the quality of courage was not among them. But when that earthenware vessel of a body of mine was well moistened, I had the levitating sense of being a spectator, an onlooker, free to be impudent as a gallery god of Drury Lane, and as detached from the dangers in the plot when the passions of the stage found words and blows.

Being close to her, with my feet almost touching hers, and a yellow lantern playing the sun in a match-box of a room, she still seemed less of a woman, of an individuality, to me, than the figure in some tableau. Perhaps it was because the cape was still about her, for she shivered with frozen blood, chilled by something more than weather; and needed warmth. Her lips were tight-pressed, as if she were afraid to open them.

Retrospectively, I have shuddered at my hour or more in that cramped space with the murderess; and shaken at remembering she hated traitors. There was purpose in her; the purpose that settles down on itself like compact coils which a finger's pressure may release.

"What do you want?" she said at last.

Her lips quivered, her voice trembled—but as a rapier shivering from a blow, not tremulous in an unsteady hand. That was not what she had intended to say when she had ordered me in. It was an equivocation.

"I? Nothing. Show me your hands and I'll tell you again why I came. I'm no palmist to read fortune in the criss-cross of a hand's map. But if your fingers are empty I can show where you left your knife; and mine was not the red sheath for it—as you hoped."

"What do you mean?" she asked unconvincingly, perhaps not greatly caring to convince, but falling conventionally on to that sort of evasion.

"Why did you send Tom Gibson naked on such a night as this to God? Once I gave a withered wizard over at Rotuna a slab of tembac and a bottle of brandy and he laid magic stuff on my eyes, so I could see through such things as cloth and capes. Oh, yes. I can.

"On deck you had a knife. Now you have none. The hilt that studded the body of Tom Gibson is the same—as you carried."

I had no way of knowing that it was, or rather of proving it. But I had no doubt.

"Who?"

It was an exclamation.

I told her again that poor Tom, all amazed and wondering, wrestling with memory to discover how and why it had happened, since he was no quarrelsome fellow, now stood in the anteroom of heaven waiting to be kicked hellward. Later on, in years to come, she could meet him there and apologize; that I would probably come too, and sustain her, help convince him that it had been a mistake.

She had both hands to her face, covering her eyes. She was shaken, but not sobbing. Not at all. Her eyes were tearless when her hands fell away, dropped, and her arms hung for a moment loosely as if tied to her shoulders.

"It wasn't Raikes?"

She spoke low-voiced, driving at me at one and the same time a question and a confession.

"Raikes!"

"Wasn't it Raikes? Tell me! Oh, wasn't it?"

I thought I understood. Raikes, ill-fated, hearing her secret through no fault of his, was expected to have kept it as only a dead man can. She had made a mistake, after all, but I had not been fortunate as I thought, though Tom Gibson's luck was bad as I had thought it.

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She said it was "terrible" and seemed to mean it, but was not broken down. She stared at me, or rather through me, in a kind of dazed wonderment; and seemed sincere without being horrified. She put her hands together and the long, pale, strong fingers weaved in and out; but otherwise for seconds she was motionless, looking toward but scarcely at me.

"All my life I could never do anything otherwise than wrong." Her voice had the vacant, hollow sound of one thinking aloud, or addressing oneself. But as she talked she seemed to focus, more and more, her gaze on me, and at last was talking to me directly.

All her life, she repeated, her mistakes had been tragic; and, bitterly, she said that long ago she reached the point of not caring what she did. Look at her here with Davenant!

OF COURSE, I understood then nothing of what that meant. She did not pause to explain. I listened. I had the curious sense of detachment, so alcoholically pleasant, of unreality; the sense that it was tensely interesting without affecting a personal contact—as when one is a spectator at a tragic play.

She had watched for Raikes, she had watched closely, by the galley. From the shadows, where she half-crouched and half-pressed herself into the outline of the bench, so as not to be noticed, she had kept her eyes fastened on whoever came within the light of the lantern hung up there.

Hot tea was at hand for whoever wanted it—at all hours of night or day there was hot tea or coffee. She had seen Raikes come once—seen his face—but there were too many people about; she could not follow him.

At last she saw him, just after the watch changed, alone—recognized him by the tar blot on the back of his shirt though she had not seen his face. She followed. She spoke, whispering. He turned—she struck.

She could use a knife! Oh, how well and for what cause! Most damnable, too, if I may be permitted a comment. That was why she had been so interested at what I had said the first night about Williams and his thirsty knife. Another of my lies, come home with a sharp beak.

It was strange, it was impressive, she said, how many little things touched her and Williams alike; and some big things too. She had heard of him long before. She too was an "outlaw"—her word. From the first she had felt they would some day meet. There was such a thing as fate in the world. Her uncle—the father-relation vanished—by sheer accident, fate, had engaged Hurricane Williams.

She hated her uncle—with an almost casual frankness she said that. She hated all men, particularly her uncle; but not him so much as— She checked herself abruptly; a glint of alarm passed through her eyes that she should have come so close to admitting something, whatever it was, that was not to be confessed by even a murderess.

Davenant was a terrible man. Her family was a terrible family. The mother's side came from Sicily; the grandmother had been born a countess there. Terrible in vengeance, she meant; and with a little pride she emphasized it. She did not put on pride; it simply emanated.

But Davenant was more than terrible; the English blood, I judged—she did not go into such speculation—had evidently given him poise, patience, an icy, deceptive shell. She had much the same.

Davenant could not be trusted—ever. He regarded her only as a gambler regards his loaded dice.

Davenant had intended to kill Raikes. Raikes had heard why he and she were going to Dakaru. But the devil always keeps his pot stirring; Raikes was a sailor, and Williams treated Davenant no better than, no differently from, the men he drove.

Besides, there was a reward for Williams's head: Davenant would go far from his way for money. He was now some twelve thousand miles from his home—after money. So in the stirring of the devil's spoon, Raikes and Davenant got their heads close.

She—she had tried to warn Williams. He had ignored her. He bruskly turned away when she approached, or tried to approach, him alone.

That afternoon she had gone right into his cabin and told him—not listening to his impatient interruptions, not paying attention to his manner of turning away from her. She had told him, and he had not believed her. He had been silent, but

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his expression seemed to say that she was lying for some obscure purpose, such as a woman is never long without.

As has already been evident, much of what I write here is my own interpretation based on what she said, as well as on the more reliable evidence of things that later developed.

With any other man, at any other time, in her disturbed—and disturbing—life, she would have been furious. To be treated so! When intentions were noble, at that. And, too, her blood was Sicilian, or much of it.

But somehow fatalism had spread its black wings over her. She recognized Fate, or thought she did. More than fate—or as a part of fate—was a blind idealization of Williams. Love. She did not say that. She did not say idealization.

"I understand—everything," was her sentence, not nearly so revealing in words as in voice.

She had, in the course of her interest in Williams's name—both of them had had bitter relations with Grahame of Dakaru—searched all of the many articles written by returned travelers and antipodean scribblers for English papers. Most of these were imaginative; and journalists are inclined to be sympathetic toward the picturesque.

Much that Williams had done, and a great deal that he had not done, had found its way into print; and more than once the purported story of his basic tragedy—the woman who sought to have him hanged, who did have him hanged—had been told. The frequent efforts to betray him on all sides were, more or less accurately, summed up from time to time in the press; and traitors that even try to serve the law are likely to find journalists unsympathetic. Miss Davenant had found color in plenty to heighten her own picture of him.

She knew more about him, or more of what was *said* about him, than I did. She was tensely interested in the fact that no person—and "person" was shaded by something subtle in her manner and voice to mean no woman—had ever been loyal to Williams. There was some kind of a story about how his own mother, at some time or other, had been fearfully prejudiced against him.

And I knew that deep within this tragic Sicilian was love of Williams—though she slid the word "love" scornfully from her lips when it came casually into her remarks.

Not knowing Williams, she had been alarmed by what Raikes and Davenant planned.

I mean not knowing him as I knew him.

Not that he was invulnerable. At least I don't suppose that he was. People could hurt him, did hurt him.

But kill him? The man that struck murderously at him was nearly doomed if he failed a hair's breadth; and all had failed. He was sudden in movements and hard in blows.

But it was difficult to understand, for me to understand, why he never seemed to hold a grudge against anybody lucky enough to strike at his life and get away alive. Some did—if they shot from a distance.

I was soon to realize that she had thought I was a friend of Williams', and had been anxious to confide in me, though Raikes was already marked. It had had to be Raikes rather than her uncle, because there was still something to be done that Davenant had to do.

Davenant might have been after money only at Dakaru; but her quest for vengeance was genuine, genuine as his afterward came to be.

SHE was sitting down, her face framed in her two hands that pressed against the cheeks, pressed into a kind of symmetry the irregular outline of the sunken temples and exposed cheek-bones.

"What is to become of us all?" she asked, reaching over and putting a hand on my knee, and peering at me as if I had in some way impressed her with prophetic power.

Her hand returned to her cheek. There was nothing helpless, nothing even appealing, about her question or gesture. She asked it interestedly, as if I might know; but not as if any answer I could make would assist or would injure. What is written must be.

There are some with spirits bold enough to stare into the black eye-sockets of Fate—and not flinch. I did not think of her as being particularly bold, but as amazingly cruel, hardened.

"What is to become of us all?" she asked again.

I ask, how could I know? If we got before a storm we would probably have a

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reef for a tombstone, and then the mermaids that salted the sea with their tears would weep over such of us as were handsome sailor men; but if the fool ship went on, then. . . .

Her hands were lowered on her face; the chin rested on the knuckles; and by the parted lips and puzzlement in her dark eyes I saw her wonder that I could say such things at such a time. Below the hair that lay close against her temples, I saw the green pendants, twinkling in the light, dim as it was. Some way they seemed to match her eyes, to be a complement to them, though the eyes were black.

"You made me think you hated him," she said accusingly, as if by some means, indefinite but nevertheless responsible, I was concerned in the mistake that tripped poor Gibson into death.

I did not see any connection between the two sentences. She seemed to feel that one led to the other.

"Why shouldn't I hate him?" I asked. "What has he ever done for me? Fished me out of water once. Flung me over his shoulder once when my knee was broken by a war-club. He backed shooting through the surf to a boat of fellows that were afraid to land and help. Strapped me flat to my back and let me howl through long nights for somebody with half a heart to shoot. I hate pain.

"Things like that: for what? To keep me alive. Who wants to be alive? Think of sleeping forever and forever!"

"I can't sleep at all," she said simply.

That appeared to be the only thing she heard—my comment on sleep. But it wasn't so.

After a minute of thought she remarked, as if something had been made clear to her, that I owed my life to him. I told her I owed a lot of things that scarcely made life worth while to him, too. Having to work, for instance.

Her manner, not her voice, asked what *was* the matter with me. Women can't understand a drunken man, unless they know he is drunk; and as alcohol for a time goes to my tongue instead of my legs I was the more incomprehensible.

But I gradually realized that what she meant by the repeated question as to what would become of us, was what would be done about Tom Gibson's murder? It was only the disconcerting, haphazard speech from me that checked her intentions of getting me more or less implicated in secrecy, if not sympathy.

She got to the point deviously, remarking—with a hopeless sigh, resigned, perhaps sincere — that if her uncle found it out, well— The rest was left to be imagined; the impetus she gave the imagination shot it straight to the conjecture of something unspeakably tragic.

Then she demanded—

"What will *he* think?"

She cared more for that answer than for her uncle's finding out.

For some reason I was quiet and made no kind of answer; perhaps I was a little drowsy. I had the sensation of hearing her only from afar.

With sudden resolution she got up and threw the cape off her shoulders; and, all crimson, it fell to her feet. She had thrown it off to have her hands free; and to me there was something startling, mildly so, in the abrupt revealment, for I had not before seen her without that somber drapery.

Her body was rather slender, not thin, but more certainly not rounded. She wore a short black skirt with a broad belt, vividly covered with yellow, perhaps gold braid. The full, silken, blouse-like waist was wine-colored. Whether excitement flushed her pale cheeks or whether they caught color from the red cloth, it would be difficult to say; but her face was no longer pale.

Her fingers snatched, rather than loosened, the earrings, and with a gesture and a word she asked me to get up from the chest. She opened it quickly, tumbled the clothes to one side, so that some fell unheeded to the deck; and, coming at a chamois bag, she pulled open its mouth and thrust the good handful of glittering things at me.

"That is everything I have. You won't tell? You needn't tell. No one will know, and some day I may show how I can't forget when any one does me kindness. Once I had— Oh, these few are nothing!"

Then remembering she was driving a bargain, she corrected herself. They were not nothing—only by comparison. The earrings were valuable. All the stones were genuine. She would never have paste—never! Her contempt was not theatric.

I took a step backward.

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Was I refusing? It was everything she had. Besides, no one need know.

I shook my head. What the ——, I asked, could I do with the stuff? Natives didn't know gems from glass, or care for gold more than for brass, and my sole use would be in gifts or trade. Sell it? What for? Money?

I was getting tangled, or rather losing my sense of detachment. She was bringing me, so to speak, on to the stage. I don't like to talk when there is need for seriousness. I am awkward. I feel implicated, caught.

Besides, what was there to be bribed for? I knew better than to tell Williams a woman had done murder on his ship; and who else was there to tell?

Her seriousness was inescapable. She was aroused. To her this appeared a fair bargain, not so much because of what she was buying as because of what she was offering; that is, everything of value that she had. If the widow's mite, or the rich man's load that pyramids the camel's back so it can not pass the eye of a needle, be all that can be offered as a purchase price, one is expected to consider the sacrifice rather than the value.

Why did I refuse? Did I think there was something more? Bah—I was like all men! What did I want? Name it.

For a last time, would I or would I not accept? Look, this was gold and precious stones—and the glittering trinkets were plucked up and dropped temptingly between her long fingers.

There was a hard glaze over her eyes. She was terribly in earnest; the dormant southern blood was foaming; an idea, a determination was in her brain.

I was not afraid. It was later, when I was sober, that I had chills over it; and of course when drunk I am rarely sincere. Never so when sober.

I have too sensitive an appreciation of the dramatic not to have known what I was doing. Besides she was a woman, and a woman draws bravado to the surface.

All the gallantry in the world, I suspect, has been, not through courage, but to impress woman. Men are gallant at times when no woman is around because they remember her.

So, suddenly exalted by the opening of a full-blown idea in my own head, I extended my hand, took the chamois sack and pulled tight the thong. For that second she had the intent look of one who has thrown a rock at a mark, and stands in concentration awaiting the result.

I turned my back on her, loosened and opened the window. Through the port went bag and gems, and a flap of spray came back in that sentient, accurate way that ocean water often has. Salty drops besprinkled my face. Perhaps a mermaid gratefully splashed her thanks.

I closed the port and turned to Miss Davenant, myself again. The devil, I told her, had bought me long ago; it was superfluous to force pay on to me for any work of his.

She was not used to the truth, at least not used to having it from men. She demanded why I did that. Her anger was apparent, but she suspended judgment for a second or two.

What did I mean by that? Why, I meant that I hadn't lost enough sense yet to weigh down myself with stuff that some fool might want, and crack me over the head to get.

What did she want? Silence? Couldn't she have it as well with her rings in the bottom of the ocean as in the bottom of my pocket? She could have had it as well with them on her fingers; but a woman never feels she has got what she really, deeply wants unless she suffers.

Good-by—and I went out.

I was a little unsteady, but, too, the ship was rolling. I went on deck, ascending the stairs with great deliberation.

ON DECK I saw two forms about a lantern. I approached. They were talking.

Davenant held a knife in his hand. He was examining it, and Williams held the lantern almost against the knife.

"As I said," Davenant remarked, slowly turning the knife back and forth, "this looks—this *is* hers. Not that she wouldn't use it—her grandmother came from Sicily.

"This is very queer—very queer. Dula never spoke to the man in her life. I am sure of that. You don't think—" Davenant broke off.

"One of my seamen has been murdered," said Williams coldly. "I'd swing whoever did it from a yard-arm."

He said it not as a threat but as a statement, as he might have said: "I'd pitch

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any man over the side if he refused to obey orders."

He might do that; but the chances were that he would jump over and fish the disobedient one out. But the *Sally Martin* didn't have a yard-arm. A mere technicality perhaps. I might call his attention to it later.

"Your justice is severe," said Davenant.

The sneer was subtle. I caught it, though.

I came from the shadows, talking:

"Inquest? What have we here? Well, well, a knife. Gibson was about your build, skipper—in the dark, you know. A good strong hand sent home that blow.

"Well, well, what a sharp knife! Miss Davenant early in the evening told me she'd lost a knife. Right out of her room. Stolen. Wonder if 't was this one?

"Who *could* have done it? What'd you think, Mr. Davenant? Somebody mistook poor old Tom Gibson for the skipper?

"Miss Davenant said the knife was an heirloom. Looks like one, doesn't it? Is it hers? Oh, it is? Now who could've been snoopin' around in her cabin?

"A knife, she said. Didn't know she meant a youthful cutlas.

"By the way, Mr. Davenant, Raikes has been boasting a good deal about— But you understand, no doubt. He's dropped hints that— And he's the sort of fellow that looks at home dangling from the end of a yard-arm."

Davenant, with an ill-concealed trace of anxiety, asked what Raikes had said.

"Said? What could he say? Nothing, more than I to whom you have also been—ah—polite.

"But the manner of the man, his hems and haws, and the wise winking of his lone eye— Why, sir, to see Raikes strut it, you'd think that you, the owner, conspired to make him captain though the scuppers ran blood. He's a —— rascal, liar and cutthroat, like myself, so I know——"

"Stow that nonsense," said Williams, his voice steely and final.

He always gave orders, big ones and little ones, in just such a voice as Joshua must have used when he commanded the sun and moon to stand still. So I went off and to bed, but being too sober to sleep I dreamed.

MANY things happened in the following days, and none of them important.

The first thing that happened to poor Tom when he came blundering into this world, much as he had blundered out of it, was to be swathed in flannel by a midwife; and the last thing was to be swathed in canvas, sewed snugly in by Hawkins and myself, with a link or so of iron chain at his feet to make sure that he went toward the place where he belonged.

Over he went, feet first. The only prayer that went up was a suppressed, strained, "God forgive me!" from Miss Davenant, who, again in her black cape, with a black scarf thrown over her head and tied around her face and neck so that little was seen but her eyes, stood on the poop looking down.

I was near her. No one else was near enough to hear; or if he had heard was near enough her secret to understand.

Over he went with a heavy relieved sound at the water's surface, like a great sigh. For two seconds, scarcely longer, there was a hushed, solemn pause as our eyes strained at the white streak passing from sight in the green crystal waves, edged with foam.

Williams shouted, quickly, throwing words as if he flung them with his hand, and stood watching, somberly, critically, as the men moved to their work. The burial service, such as it was, was over. The *Sally Martin* was cracking on her way.

And we poor futile fools went on with the sweat and sins of life, though do what we might and fight as we would, in our own time we would follow poor Tom. Whither away and why? Perhaps he already had learned, and smiled in drowsy faint scorn to think how men hung on to life.

Most of that day Miss Davenant stood very quietly by the rail and looked down into the sea. But most of other days she had done much the same; yet the difference was enough for Hawkins to remark it

"She feels bad 'cause it was her knife," he offered me by way of enlightenment.

She found a moment to say that she did not understand, but she thanked me. A kind of strong inquiry was in her eyes, a doubt as to whether I had had motives of my own for saying what I had to Davenant and Williams; and if so what were they? She seemed a little uneasy rather than

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grateful, as if used to having to pay in pounds of flesh for every service done her.

Somehow I was less touched with sympathy for her than by something else, something not fear or distrust but having to do with her inordinate composure, which I knew very well was much like the composure of a serpent lying in motionless coils. Woman learns patience the last of all things; and it is terrible, this conjunction of coiled patience with woman's unreasoning, unheeding, immolating passion. She seemed not to invite sympathy; less because she was unentitled to it, than consciously to repel it as something worthless, usually insincere.

"I was angry last night when you threw my things away. I don't understand yet. But I thank you."

Her lips scarcely moved.

"He—" meaning Davenant— "said it was a good thing I mentioned having missed the knife to you."

Then, as if reluctantly convinced, but with the shadow of a doubt or two lingering—

"You are clever."

I admitted that I was. She looked at me again humorlessly, her doubts increasing.

"I don't understand you," she said, not inviting confidence, but being frank. And she added reflectively, as if it was after all the really important thing, "I do understand him"—meaning Williams.

VI

TWO weeks later life was still unchanged on the *Sally Martin*, though I had acquired wisdom with every passing hour, and the chest in Williams's cabin had a new lock. He had discovered the empty bottle.

But that was putting new bolts on the stable when the mare was gone. I had a dozen bottles stowed when the new lock appeared.

Williams said nothing. He had other things to think of, and not the least was a false log into which I peeped from time to time. Precious little good, I told myself, of wasting all that time imagining weather and knots from Singapore when he had no clearance papers.

But it was his neck the gibbet beckoned for. Not mine. I'd swear I was a pressed man.

I was nearer a mutineer than anything else. Hawkins, too. We were leagued with Davenant. Only Hawkins did not know it. Raikes had gone over to Williams, and carried warnings about us.

Davenant was going to divide the wealth of Grahame of Dakaru among us. He would more willingly have divided his sheet to make us a funeral shroud, only it would take more than one sheet to encircle Hawkins.

Understand me: Davenant was not so much of a fool as he may appear. I had, with the few well-chosen words already set down, broken off his relations with Raikes, much to the regret of both.

But Davenant could not trust him longer, and Raikes might call me—as he did—a liar, a black liar, a thrice doubly damned liar; but that Raikes had not kept his secret was evident in my repetition of it.

It happened that Davenant was, in addition to having some hate of Williams, afraid of him. When a pirate and a gentleman sit down to a roast fowl, there is no doubt as to who will do the carving. Davenant felt himself the gentleman.

Hurricane Williams was about the last man he would have picked for the voyage, because at Dakaru he thought there was a fine estate and much wealth; and some people feel that it is better to fail than to share. The discovery that it was Williams, and not some obscure sailing-master by the name of Moore, caused Davenant to be melancholy and wish for a way of getting away from what by common report was an exceedingly dangerous man.

Common report is as much to be trusted as an heir's tears, though in his case there was some convincing evidence. The man who once blew over a cliff and landlocked the gunboat of a very proud European power is likely to have a reputation. Williams had done that, and some other things that made the Germans want his head. In those days the Germans wanted almost everything in the South Seas; since then the want has grown, also diminished.

Anyway, Williams was known as a pirate; and Davenant must have felt pretty much like one who fishes for rock-cod and finds himself in possession of a shark.

The belief that Raikes was something of a navigator had encouraged a mutual understanding. The fact that Raikes knew what Davenant was up to at Dakaru

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assisted in the understanding. What would ultimately have happened to Raikes had best be left to the imagination, for he was only an ignorant, greedy fellow.

About the time that a new lock appeared on the chest in Williams's cabin a thing took place that rather gave coloring to certain hints I had been dropping, when chance offered, into Davenant's ear, *i. e.*, that I hated Williams. What I really hated was not to find out why Davenant and his sinister niece were laying so mysteriously their course for Grahame's "empire." Miss Davenant had retired into incommunicable reserve. She spoke and passed, or passed without speaking.

We ran into a bit of good weather; and, the sun being warm, the wind steady, and Hawkins having the wheel and the deck to himself, I approached, gave him what was left in a bottle, and we fell into an argument about something or other. There was a woman in it, I know. There is a woman in all the troubles that come to men.

Davenant came up and took a seat by the rail, but we did not notice him. We did not notice much of anything, and the *Sally Martin*, being always up to something, veered from her course and was in a fair way to go stern on when Williams appeared.

Without warning, without a word, his iron fist crashed on Hawkins's head, and the ox-like man went to the deck with a grunt. Williams swung his weight to the wheel and brought her around, then gave me the helm and such a look as made shivers ripple from neck to heel.

Hawkins got up dizzily, ragefully, saying something about no man could treat him like that. Williams—braced, feet apart, knees slightly bent and neck drawn in—waited.

Every man forward had suddenly found some reason to be on the rigging or forecastle. They probably wished afterward that they had had wit enough to rush the poop and choose a new captain; but men have to be prodded and welded into organized action, even into mutiny.

And Williams had to accept a fight whenever it was offerred. Nothing but praise and reward would await any crew that overpowered him and brought him into port.

The fierce laws that uphold the captain on the high seas denied to him their support. He was an outlaw; and men took his commands because they were afraid of him, not because they were afraid of some obscure, vague judge with powers of death and imprisonment between his teeth.

Hawkins, powerful, huge of body, murderously aroused, came at him—and was met more than half-way. I feared a knife-flash, for Williams was deadly in a corner; and nothing could have seemed more of a handicap than to be in front of that enormous fellow, who, even though setting down much of his weight to fat, was still powerful.

Williams did not dodge or duck. He scorned such artifice of fighting. He seemed to have the uncanny gift of being able to precipitate himself headlong, as if thrown; such was his rush then. An iron-taloned left hand closed like a dog's teeth on Hawkins's neck, and the overhand drive of the right arm smote again and again before Hawkins, awkwardly but powerfully, clawed Williams to him with crushing embrace and lifted him clear of the deck.

So rapidly as almost to elude perception Williams brought a knee into the bulging belly, and, releasing his left hand, struck a short blow with the point of his crooked elbow at the base of Hawkins's jaw. Both men went to the deck together, but Hawkins did not get up.

Williams waited, his tense face more fierce than ever, and his hand slipped inquiringly to the sheath at his side. He was breathing hard, but with deliberate evenness. Men dropped from the rigging and hurried silently out of sight.

Hawkins, hand to jaw, reelingly sat up. His eyes were dazed and scarcely open. He muttered gutturally, plainly—

"—— you, I liked you!"

Then Williams did an accountable thing, for him, so unbending and molded in a sort of steel-like rigidity. He said:

"I still like you. But you two fools are on a ship. Not in a barroom."

THAT night Hawkins and I talked it over. I assured him with some sincerity that he had come off with the greater luck.

For one thing, Williams had spoken with me alone for about two minutes. What he said was neither abusive nor pleading, but that I, who had been near him so long, would drunkenly meddle with a man on

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watch was surprizing; he did not expect discipline, but he would have obedience—and punishment.

It hurt, for this was the man who would throw his life into hazard time and again for anybody that had even so faint a claim on his friendship as I; and in more ways than a half-dozen I was his debtor. I knew he was fierce-tempered and merciless in every way excepting at heart.

Those two minutes hurt more than what followed; I went aloft with a tar-bucket. Every dirty job from dumping slops to swabbing the galley was given to me.

Though he could scarcely swallow and had a swollen nose and battered cheek, I told Hawkins he came off the easier; but at that moment we were both nursing a sense of outrage. Williams had gone too far. There was no doubt about it.

"Wouldn't wiggle my little finger to save 'im from ——," said Hawkins thickly. His articulation was impaired for a time.

"This is my last trip," I said. "He's planning to make some port some place in the islands. Making a false log. We'll get away there somehow."

"Don't mind the last beatin'. I ask' for that. But catchin' me when I wasn't lookin'. No. I'm mad."

Pause, while we meditated. Then—

"Where does he get it, anyhow?"

"That's why they call him a hurricane. Ought to see him when two or three jump him at once. But he hit you when you wasn't looking. He just goes crazy when he catches anybody soldiering. Times, I'm afraid of him. But he didn't use the knife. I was afraid."

Then Hawkins talked. He had been to Dakaru with Carp Taylor, slaver, the same that Williams had once caused to disembark a load of black boys. Grahame and Carp Taylor were not friends, perhaps, but they had business dealings.

Nobody was a good friend to the brutal, sour, villainous old Grahame. A thousand miles from nowhere, Grahame did as he pleased. Planters not so far away from consuls and governors did pretty much the same. Grahame treated his dogs better than the natives. Most men did treat dogs better than natives.

The best thing that could be said of Grahame was that probably he was no cannibal. He was everything else. No doubt he would have been that, too, if he could have got hold of Williams. He said—or was said to have said—that he would cut Williams's heart out and eat it raw.

Hawkins saw what went on at Dakaru. He heard what Carp Taylor and Grahame said of Williams, and had decided that Williams must be pretty much of a man to fill fellows like that with anger and fear.

Grahame had built himself a paradise on top of hell. He guarded it with Portuguese and hounds. The scoundrel must have had some kind of a sense of beauty, for he had a big house and gardens, all manner of flowers and shrubs, many imported, and it was said—though who had been inside to report truly I do not know—that the house was filled with treasures and also held a wondrously beautiful girl. The native servants may have regarded iron pots and copper pans as "treasures."

Anyway, rumor gave him wealth, enormous wealth; but no money. He paid for everything in pearls, and defended his fishing-grounds as if they belonged to him.

He had groves of coconut-palms, but never sold a pound; long avenues of bananas, and fed the fruit to hogs; sago-palm groves and cacao, pineapple-fields—and most of it was wasted. He would sell nothing. He did not want strangers around.

If a gunboat came casually, or to inquire into certain stories that missionaries heard from a distance and repeated insistently, Grahame—it was said—would receive and entertain the officers, show them the plantation, so beautifully cared for, give the crew all they could eat and carry, call up the "negroes" and let them tell their own stories—through the Portuguese overseers. The officers would sail away, satisfied in every particular except in failing to have seen the legendary white girl of Dakaru; and on the same evening the natives that had complained would be shot.

Didn't they get enough to eat? Didn't they have tobacco and meat and fruit and fish, all they could cram into their capacious bellies? What if they were whipped and knocked about for being lazy? They were being civilized. —— savages. Supposing they never were allowed to return to their islands; what more did they want than they had?

"I heard 'im say it," Hawkins muttered. "Him an' Carp Taylor was standin' down by the native quarters waitin' for two

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blacks that had been caught out at sea in a canoe. Runaway. No place to go, but they went anyhow. A big bloodhound was rubbin' a flabby ear 'gainst his leg, an' he reached down an' rubbed its head an' went on cussin' the boys for tryin' to get away.

"They was brought up. Hands tied behind 'em—two old fellows. A little black Portugee, spittin' like a mad cat, whipped 'em up—an' Grahame shot 'em.

"I saw 'im. Just like that—*bing-bing*, he shot 'em. 'Fore they could get to their knees to 'im.

"Then he cussed 'em. Said no more black boys'd try that. Carp Taylor, he laughed."

AND I told what had taken Williams to Dakaru. A half-drunken blackbirder told a good story on the wharf at Auckland one night. Williams was there, saying nothing, wearing a beard and waiting for a shipment of dynamite from Sydney—and holding up a trader that had agreed to take him and the "trade goods" around to a little island in Carpentaria where Williams had a boat hid.

The drunken slaver told his story: How Grahame had run across him and wanted natives; and, having a crew of Samoans, he sold his *crew*. It happened that Williams was the close friend of a Samoan chief, that he knew the islands as well as he knew his own deck, that he used Samoan sailors altogether if he could get them; and in more ways than it would take a week to tell he was a man the Samoans liked and trusted.

Something happened to the blackbirder that night. It may be he fell and broke his neck, or it may be somebody pushed him, or possibly somebody just caught the top of his head and twisted it around till his neck cracked. Anyway, something happened.

About three months later something also happened at Dakaru. A drab little schooner, carrying about three times too much sail for her size, puffed in. Clash, slap, splash, boat after boat began to leave her—boats full of natives with rifles.

Grahame's own schooner was in the bay, a long trim little ship, swinging at her moorings as if rocking herself to sleep. She was wakened in a hurry, though. Two boat-loads of natives made for her, and were all over in a minute just as if they belonged there. I suppose they did—they had come to stay, anyhow.

About the same time the long-boat and twenty natives and two white men hit the beach—and they didn't stop. A Portuguese or two and some dogs got in the way, and died. There was yelling and howling and the cracking snap of rifles going off every which way. It sounded like hell with Grahame's soul just arrived. But he didn't show up, then.

"Up the road of coral sand we went," I told Hawkins. "Bright-flowered shrubs went down under our feet. We saw the eight-foot coral wall that circled the house, like miniature battlements about a city —Grahame had been working his black boys to death for years at one thing and another.

"We would have gone over that like a cat goes over a fence, but there was no need. The grilled iron gates were swung back, and beyond through the foliage we could see the big squat house.

"But we didn't go through the gate. Right there in the center of the driveway stood a girl. I had heard about her, too. The girl that didn't exist. The sort of legendary saint of Dakaru—that no white man had looked on. Portugees aren't white. Not the kind Grahame had.

"Some kind of a thin blue silk robe was about her, one hand catching it up and holding it against her breast, the other hand half-raised in a little gesture of alarm.

"I've thought about her. One has lots of time to think at sea. Too much. And I tried to remember how she really did look. Her hair was yellow and her eyes were dark. That's about all I can say for sure—excepting there was an expression on her face like a child that hasn't known fear, being suddenly awakened.

"She was only a child. I don't know anything about the ages of women, but she *was* a child. Not more 'an sixteen or seventeen. Maybe less.

"I caught the hazy impression of two native women peering frightenedly from behind a brilliant screen of hibiscus.

"Williams stopped abruptly and we pressed against him, circling and almost surrounding her. Most of the natives had heard something about angels. Missionaries always give angels blond hair. I don't know why. This was the first one they had seen.

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"She was surprized. She was startled. But she wasn't frightened. One'd never have thought there were devil Portugees and bloodhounds and a lot of bruised backs —even if the bellies were full—around there.

"'Where's Grahame?' said Williams.

"You know how he would have said it. Just as if he had grabbed her by the neck.

"'Father's gone for a ride—over there.'

"Her white arm slipped from the loose sleeve and pointed, but her eyes didn't follow her gesture."

"'Why, what *is* the matter?' she asked tremulously.

"Wiliams hesitated. You know, as a matter of principle with him—if not memory—he never believes a woman.

"For a minute I thought he was going to strike her aside and go on. She stared at him with alarm showing more and more on her delicate face. She realized that he was a terrible man. Maybe she had read of pirates. It's said Grahame's house is full of books.

"Williams whirled around. He's abrupt as lightning. He snarled two or three words, and off we went again, cutting across the grounds for the native quarters.

"We saw two or three figures scooting at a distance and yelled. It scared 'em the more.

"We started searchin' the houses and found two or three women trying to hide under mats. They said the men were working on a road about a mile off. Yes, there were Samoans with them.

"Off we started again, panting and straggling out. Two or three Portugees came nearly meeting us. They had come down the road to see what was going on. They turned and ran, shooting wildly and yelling worse.

"We came onto some black boys that had been at work, now scared half to death; but in about two seconds others began to pop from behind trees and out of the bush. There was an excited jabber of slaves and rescuers.

"Grahame had at least seventy-five black men, and about ten of them were Samoans. He had killed two.

"When word was passed they were to be carried off, those fellows—all of 'em—went crazy. Some from the Solomons. Many from Santa Cruz. Bad fellows. They wanted to burn everything and—You know. It wasn't Grahame only. It was the Portugees too. And the white girl.

"Bad natives are the most vicious beasts under the sun. Williams knows it—only he says whites ought to let 'em alone.

"There was a fine boiling and bubbling of trouble, I can tell you. The Samoans were all right; they are always all right. But the others were excited. They'd been beaten and kicked around, chewed by dogs and—well, they were dead set on just tearing the top of that old island off and making a grand stew of Portugees and Grahame.

"There was a hubbub in more tribal languages than wrecked Babel. They grabbed axes and picks and shovels, trying a war-dance and whoopin' it up as if the pot was already boiling.

"Right then an' there, I sympathized with Grahame, his Portugees and hounds. He must have known he was sitting on top of a volcano, and we'd come along an' let the black men blow up.

"We weren't in danger or anything like that. If a fight started there'd be more dead cannibals than were already buried at Dakaru.

"It was that girl at the gate that saved Grahame. I can't look very far into Williams's brain, but I have an idea if he hadn't run into that vision he would have gone off with his Samoans and left Grahame and his Portugees to fight it out. The first thing the wild blacks would have done is raid the house.

"As it was, there was no wastin' time trying to herd up that crowd. They were scattered in groups and raced about, yelling.

"Back on the run we started, and I wasn't as near the rear on the return trip as I'd been coming. I didn't want to get to straggling among that crazy mob of cannibals.

"It's not easy to tell about. Some of the Portugees were shooting from away off. The naked natives were galloping around brandishin' picks and shovels—and a Solomon Islander and Santa Cruzian too usually has a bone through his nose and a face like a hell-fiend. Chipped teeth, and bushy hair, and clattering shell beads around his neck. Missionaries say they have souls, these devils.

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UP TO the wall about the house and garden we went. A big cannibal streaked through the gate, waving an ax. He was going to be first. Williams shot him, then whirled the rifle around and clubbed down another that was boltin' past.

"In a minute he had a guard at the gate, and we were running through the grounds inside to find what other entrances there might be, and guard 'em too. We saw no one inside. The girl must've been frightened by that time.

"We did not go to the house, but a kind of cordon was thrown around it to finish any energetic cannibal that got over the wall; and Williams and I went back to the iron gates.

"The cannibals had us outnumbered two to one, but what are numbers? More targets in a case like that. We could see that the fellows on board the schooner had taken her from the mooring and were tacking—it was an open bay with a bare arm of reef stretching out as a breakwater—to bring her 'longside of our boat. The cannibals were celebrating at a distance, settin' fire to their quarters and yellin' defiance at us.

"There was a pretty situation for you. The sort that Williams is always into. He defending Grahame's daughter and property from blacks he himself had released and wanted to carry off.

"He tried to make them understand that they would be taken to their own islands if they would gather down at the beach; but he might as well have talked to a whirlwind. Pretty near everything he gets into doubles around with some kind of ironical twist, like that.

"Moreover the Samoans, who can be stubborn, were saying they wouldn't have them savages on the same ship; and were stealing pot-shots at the war-party.

"It was a mix-up to make Satan himself wriggle about in laughter; and even I grinned when Williams wasn't looking. Ruffians—black or white—might be human beings, as he said of the black ones; but I couldn't ever sympathize with his sympathy for 'em.

"I boil when I think of what they go through on plantations, but I cool off when I think what I'd go through if they ever got hold of me in a nice spot for an oven. Wrap me in plantain-leaves and bury me in a coffin of hot rocks.

"There was a flying clatter of hoofs—an' a big man, bareheaded, with long black mustaches like walrus-tusks, came into sight, and he came on. He had a pistol in his hand.

"I had a long look at him afterwards, but I remember him from that first glimpse. His hair was rather long and white, but the mustache was black, and his face was big and full, a bit fat. No doubt it was usually red, with that overfed complexion of the beef-eater some Englishmen never lose, no matter where they go.

"But then it was not red. There wasn't a drop of blood in it. His mouth was half-open and the teeth stood out. Surprizin' what one notices in a flash. His lips were drawn back as though he were going to tear somebody with his teeth.

"The cannibals made as if to run at him. They did run a few steps, but stopped to throw whatever they had. Perhaps the fear of him was too deep.

"Anyway he paid no attention to them. He rode for the gate. He came at a gallop.

"The Samoans with us made as if to stand, then parted right and left. I pitched myself to one side. Grahame was coming through—and he was comin' fast.

"It's a wonder nobody shot. Because he was white, perhaps. Besides, anybody knew why he came on like that. We had seen the girl.

"Williams was left alone in the gateway. As though a panic's breath had blown the rest of us aside we cleared the road. He lifted a hand and cried—

"'Stop!'

"By ——, he meant it, too.

"Grahame didn't even try to stop. He had a crop and reins in the same hand and struck the horse's shoulder—a big bay with a white streak on the chest—and the pistol fired almost pointblank. It missed though, for Williams had jumped—in that sudden way of his, like a stone from a sling—at the horse's head.

"All I saw was a blur of figures; a powerful horse with head dragged down, stumbling for a tenth of a second, with Williams clear of the ground, holdin' on by dead weight, likely to be shaken off and crushed under hoof, or smashed when the horse fell going like that. Leaning over, striking with the crop an' cursing, was Grahame.

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"That picture didn't last much longer than one could snap finger an' thumb; then the horse was down, kicking out terribly. Grahame lay some yards ahead, moving drunkenly in an effort to get to his feet. His head was cut and blood streaked down his gray hair and smeared the whole side of his face.

"Williams scrambled out with sudden, fierce movements like a fish jerks itself off a hook. His shirt was torn away. The shoulder and back were a bluish red—as if he had been flayed, or had started to be flayed, and broken away. Gravel and sand were ground into his flesh. The side of his face was scraped too; and blood appeared.

"He staggered a little, an' then took a step forward, limping, almost sinking. The effort it took to straighten himself was as plain as—well, as the chance he took in goin' off his feet at that horse's head. The horse was up and galloping crazily through the garden, the stirrup flappin' an' frightenin' him the more.

"Grahame didn't have his bearings for a moment or two. He only had the urge to reach the house. He still held the pistol. He reeled forward, crisscross like a drunken man, leanin' way over, about to fall every instant.

"'Stop', said Williams again.

"He had a broken ankle, but he stayed on his feet. He even walked a step or two. I don't suppose he felt pain just then, but a barefoot man with a broken ankle hasn't anything but grit to stand on.

"And as for pain, it made no difference when he did feel it later. Nothing exists for him but the thing he wants.

"'Stop,' Williams had said, and that seemed to remind Grahame.

"He staggered around. There was a kind of mystified expression on his face that went off at once.

"He raised the pistol. He forgot it was empty. We had all forgotten."

"Williams's knife went from his hand—like an arrow. It buried itself high on the left side of Grahame's shoulder. It was meant for his heart. He was already unsteady on his feet. The blow put him to the ground.

"Then the girl came out of the house. She came tearing herself from the frightened black women that tried to hold her back; and her thin blue silk robe was torn and pieces of it were left in the hands of the women.

"She pulled the flimsy, ragged silk about her as she ran down the path. She was gettin' it out of the way of her running. Not thinking about the ivory shoulder that showed, and the silken white chemise. Her yellow hair streamed behind her, an' she flung herself by her father as if lifelessly pitched there. And she moaned, too choked for the articulation of even sobs."

—— And that was the beginning of what happened to us at Dakaru. The rest of it happened like this:

WILLIAMS walked up to them, the father and daughter, where Grahame, half-risen, was tugging to pull the knife from his shoulder and cursing Williams, me, us—all, everything, everybody, even God Himself—with a steady, implacable flow of terrible words. Williams went up. He limped a little. Not much. He said nothing, then.

It was very quiet then, or seemed so, though down by the quarters the dogs were howling in the distance—barking and rushing in and out at the cannibals, who howled too, worse than the dogs. The Portuguese were shooting. Ragged reports of rifles, and yelling now and then. But that was at a distance. It seemed very far away.

Right there it was silent, still, except for half-choked oaths of Grahame, flowing out. All oaths. He said nothing that was not damnatory.

He was not in a senseless passion. No. He was like a man who stands with his heels on the brink of hell, his face toward the Judge, and does not care. Determined to say what he thinks.

Williams stooped and picked up the pistol. It was then he saw it was empty, or remembered. I edged unconsciously a little nearer.

I could not see his face. I could not see the face of the girl, huddled motionless, her arms about Grahame.

Only Grahame's face I could see, and that was on Williams. It was distorted almost to tears; the long black mustache hung down even with the point of his chin, or below, and the chin and lips worked at his oaths like some horrible, humanized mask.

I suppose he thought Williams would kill him. The end of a fight is death in

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those far places and between such men as go there to break laws.

I don't know what Williams thought; I never knew; nor how he felt. I know he was hurt, hurt more somewhere inside of himself than by the flayed skin and broken ankle. The men who hate men, and women too, who are grimly implacable—they are really tender-hearted. They hate because they have suffered; and they wouldn't have suffered if they were not more sensitive, more trusting, than those who are not deeply wounded and made bitter when people don't keep faith with them.

Take it the other way around. The terrible women are those who've been hurt, and could not, would not, forgive. So with men.

I am not defending him. I shall have enough to do in interpreting certain records of the Great Angel so as to keep myself from injustice in the Last Judgment Hall, without being an advocate for better men than I.

Let it be remembered why Williams made that raid; friends of his friends had been put into bondage. The Samoans were his people. They gave him welcome and harborage and sanctuary, greeting him with that limitless generosity that is peculiar to uncivilized, to barbaric and savage, people.

And some of them were already so civilized as to be willing to spread his whereabouts for the stuff with which gin is bought. These were the last days of real kingly power on the islands, and such civilized natives would have paid dearly for their betrayal, and paid by the savage code.

Williams broke laws, and he broke heads, and he was often a brute, ferocious; but he never tormented. No one else tormented anybody or anything if he saw. He struck and he killed as the need seemed to require.

He was always brief in his speech. He did not question Grahame. He did not tell Grahame that he had come back to the garden to keep the cannibals out, and that the two carcasses there at the edge of the road where they had been thrown were muted witnesses on his behalf. He never defended himself anyway, anywhere. Perhaps he thought it a waste of words.

He said he had come for the Samoan sailors; that he would take all the natives that would go with him—take them home.

With that Grahame knew him as Hurricane Williams. Stories of incomprehensible audacity were told of him; how he made slavers disgorge and in other ways offensive to civilized men won the worship of savages.

"Cannibal himself," said rumor.

Cannibalism—the crime so terrible that there are no laws among white people to punish it. It is the crime unthinkable.

It was in keeping with his luck to have people, some people, suspect him of that. They couldn't understand his sympathy with savages in any other way; though the natives with whom he was most closely associated, the Samoans, were no more cannibals than are Londoners.

GRAHAME stopped cursing. He looked at Williams as if he had recognized some—some monstrosity. It was as if his curses were inadequate; not that he was intimidated. A certain inexpressible loathing seemed to cover his face, as one might look at an armed leper.

Of course this was all in rapid seconds, but they stamped themselves on me like powerful dies.

One had to know Williams even better than I to see how deeply he regretted—I don't know precisely what. Perhaps the flower of a girl in the torn blue silk, then splotched with her father's blood. Here was contagious, shaking grief, inconsolable as if she wept over a coffin.

The Orphean lyre that moved stones and tamed wild beasts must have struck the notes of sobbing virgins.

Perhaps Williams regretted the knife sent into the body of a man who, however he might bruise and butcher blacks, asked no quarter and offered no parley when his daughter seemed in danger. I know it was an effort to resist offering to carry Grahame into the house.

Williams was skilful with wounds, too. But he turned away—as if his heart were harder than the stones that moved vibrantly before the half-god's sobbing lyre.

That is about all.

With two fairly heavy sticks, one on the outside and one on the inside of the ankle, bound tightly as I could make them under his direction, he ignored his injury. He was insensible to pain and to fatigue, shaking them off as an angry man shakes off drowsiness.

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The Samoans were flung out in a long thin line and moved down to encircle the other natives. He managed at a distance to make the four or five overseers understand, and they helped eagerly, perhaps hoping to see a massacre in the end.

Nobody was to shoot unless the line was rushed. He was emphatic. Alone he went down to talk with the trapped natives, using the meager "trade" English as a basis for the harangue.

He was always surprizingly patient with natives. It is part of their life to bicker and debate, hesitate, refuse and evade when they have already decided to agree.

He persuaded them to give themselves up. The leader among them was one who claimed to be the son of a Guadalcanar chief. The assurance that he and the few of his tribe were to be taken home was too good to be really believed, but too tempting to be rejected. Others among them had heard of Williams in that vague, half-legendary, inchoative way that rumor spreads farther than white men's footprints.

The Samoans objected. They wouldn't have the wild blacks on the same ship with them. Never. Let them be killed.

More parleying, and much formal dignity. Strange from a man who would not use words in explanation or argument with anybody of his own blood.

We sailed out with two ships. Williams was down for another act of piracy. But most amazingly he said, after certain provisions and supplies—with some boxes painted warningly with red lead—had been transferred:

"This is Grahame's ship. He'll get it back."

And that was all.

He laid the course for the smaller schooner and left me with her to head for Savaii. About all I know of navigation is to follow the wind and hope nothing'll get in the way.

He turned and made for Santa Cruz, bumped around from village to village until every man that belonged in the group was in reach of home; then he went on to the Solomons. He put those islanders right down on the beach of their village.

There was a big feast—probably with some stray bushman in the oven, and tinned meats served generously; and the chief offered Williams the earth. It happened that among those who came back was his own son.

There is no prouder blood than a savage chieftain's, and somewhere, probably around the great heart-fire of mankind's first and common fathers, the traditions of hauteur and munificent gratitude were learned by the kingly families, black and brown as well as white and yellow.

Some days later Williams started on his way. A German gunboat—the Germans were getting meddlesome in those waters even then—from a diminishing distance asked for some intimate information, and began to shoot. Probably her officers identified the schooner, for naval officers of all countries liked to visit Grahame. Escape on the sea was impossible.

Williams did not dilly-dally. He made straight for the rocks. The Germans found a burning schooner—and dynamite. Williams and his Samoans vanished among unsuspected friends, and the German landing-party was beaten back and out.

Revengeful, the boat shelled and burned the village, and destroyed two priceless high-stemmed war-canoes that had been fittingly christened at the launching by the blood of women. But the natives considered the bargain fair. There were sleek, thick German heads to smoke amid the rafters of the restored *gamal* house.

AS I finished that book of Williams's odyssey I slipped to the side and furtively threw over the bottle Hawkins and I had emptied in the course of my narrative. When I came back to his side, Hawkins had nothing to say for a long, long time.

"What do you think 'll happen when we get to Dakaru?" he asked.

"Blood will probably be splashed to the moon."

"Curious—Grahame has that big plantation. Keeps it right up, an' won't sell a thing."

"And what'd you sell if you had all you wanted?" I inquired in a lazy Socratic tone.

"All I ——"

He stopped. The idea was novel. He had to toy with it.

"All I wanted?"

Then with something like a snort:

"Can't have all you want o' nothin'. Not even o' trouble. Look at Williams. He goes huntin' it."

With renewed emphasis:

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"Grahame ain't got all he wants. Man don't work like that to amuse hisself. I mean make others work. ——, but he gives them niggers ——. Queer, ain't it? In this world you can't get all you want."

"I guess you got all you wanted this afternoon."

Hawkins rubbed his jaw and peered at me. It was dark, but he did not need light for the retort:

"An' you smell like a reg'lar sailor—all tar an' dish-water. Me? I was walloped like a man. But you— Humm! You got yours like as if you was a crippled girl."

Well pleased with his crushing wit, he began a self-satisfied tune and accompanied it by drumming on his belly.

"I wisht I was in Dixie," he hummed.

Then, breaking off—

"I never been in Dixie, but I like the tune."

His spirit was irrepressible. None others on the *Sally Martin* so much as smiled. Had the schooner carried a cargo of dead kings Hawkins's was the only manner that would have seemed unbecoming.

"Lord," he said with feeling, "I'd like to be ap-prehended for stealin' an' eatin' an ox— *an' be guilty!* Plenty to eat at Dakaru, anyway. Nice fat pigs. We'll catch a couple an' roast 'em."

He smacked his lips anticipatingly.

"Roast pig an' pineapple. Um-mm."

A reflective pause.

"Knowin' what I do about him, sort o' havin' some first-hand personal facts, so to speak, I know —— well who to put my money on. I wisht he hit you—just one time. Knocked you so far we wouldn't had to waste no canvas wrappin' you.

"You led me into temptation, you did. Go on, Red Top. Tempt me some more. Ain't you got another un stowed away handy?"

I had. We drank it—toasting Williams.

VII

MR. DAVENANT subtly encouraged me and Hawkins to remember Williams's outburst. He sounded me with a chill delicacy. How did I feel about it? His words were not that blunt, and scarcely anything more than his manner asked the question.

It was well—or maybe it was unfortunate—that he sounded me first. Hawkins would have been responsive, bluntly so. He did not like Davenant anyway. And Hawkins's brain was not supple enough to be artful and devious.

Of course he would lie, as any man should. All honest men do at times. But Hawkins was particular about his lies, as well as sensitive about the color of his jaw and nose.

He might have mistaken Davenant's interest as literally adding insult to injury. In which case he would have shown even less finesse than he had. Without being properly prodded, it would have never occurred to him to encourage Davenant's sympathy. It would probably not have occurred to him that it was sympathy.

Now I—I exploded into hearty curses. But not until I had taken several precautionary glances in many directions. Davenant thought I was guarding against Williams. I was making sure that no silent, feminine figure in a long black cape was near.

I assured him that Hawkins was filled with a consuming fire that flowed through his veins like molten coals; that his belly had become a furnace.

He poured a judicious word or two into my ear to heighten what he thought was my anger, but did not commit himself. Williams had been unjust. He had seen all. He was very lonely. Couldn't I step into his room some time for a little friendly talk?

"If that charming niece of yours should fall overboard and stay there," I said, but not aloud, "I would look with more favor on your cabin as a hatchery of plots. But Raikes used to sneak in there—and Tom Gibson is wondering why it happened."

Aloud I expressed my thanks and intentions of accepting.

"By the way," he asked, looking at me from the corners of his eyes and trying not to appear very interested, "do you know why *he* is eager to get to Dakaru?"

No, I couldn't imagine why.

He probably thought that I lied. My luck runs that way.

Davenant walked off. Erect, with head well up, he stood perhaps watching nothing but his own thoughts. It was a comfortable gray day, with the sea tossing itself into crests that fell sizzling down the steep glassy sides of waves, and with the shrouds humming at times before the gusty blows of the wind.

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I studied his back, tall and square and reserved in bearing. He had dignity, the dignity of manners. Williams, for instance, had dignity of another kind—with the utter lack of manners; the dignity of a sheer, menacing personality.

I could imagine Davenant at ease among jewel-encrusted dowagers and men who bowed from the waist, moving among them with cold grace, eying them with a sort of insolent sharpness that somehow would not be impolite.

Said I to myself—

"The Lord in his goodness protects us innocents by making such as you wear on his countenance the devil's mark."

But my knowledge then of the devil was not nearly so intimate as is needful to secure an honest man from harm.

Hawkins was reluctant to accept any kind of intimacy with Davenant. He did not like him, or that woman with the serpent's lidless eyes. We would get ourselves into trouble. It was one thing to be hanged for piracy, another to be beaten to death for mutiny.

Joke? He could see Williams taking a thing like that as a joke. No. In years to come he expected to have grandchildren scrambling about his knees. How disappointed those grandchildren would be if they were never born, and so missed the tales he would tell as an ancient mariner.

He would, he said, cut a throat or bash a head cheerfully. It depended on whose throat or head. Mine, for instance, gladly.

I coaxed; what a good joke it would be to play on Davenant! Hawkins replied that the devil did not have a sense of humor. I urged that we could find out what he was after at Dakaru; that it was a rare chance; Davenant himself had already the idea that we were mutinous.

Hawkins objected. How much of it was fear of Williams, how much of it was the unvoiceable admiration that some men have for others who batter them in a fair fight, would be difficult to say. Maybe Hawkins had caught something of that gleam from Williams's personality that fascinated me, made me, almost unwillingly at times, loyal to him, a follower.

I told Hawkins he had no finesse. He agreed, saying that whatever it was, he didn't want any either; that just then all he wanted was something to eat. So, declining to be serious, I gave up—but at the first chance conveyed to Davenant that Hawkins was desperate for vengeance.

"Raikes is a navigator, isn't he?" he asked in that stiff way of his that was very nearly awkward.

He knew better than I what Raikes had told him, but perhaps believing that all men were liars—as they are—wanted to see what I thought of it.

I assured him that Raikes might possibly hit some part of the mainland—or some similiar large landfall—by dead reckoning.

"Then Williams is the only man who can set a course?"

There was a bit of reluctance in his slow, cold words, as if he grudgingly gave Williams that credit.

"Oh, no," I assured him, rushing recklessly into his good opinion. "Half what Williams knows, I taught him. The only reason he hasn't been letting me take the bearings is because he doesn't want any one to know where he is heading."

"*You* are a good navigator?" he asked, drawing his lips back in an effort at an encouraging smile.

It was not a smile, but it tempted me to affirm what I had said.

"That simplifies matters. Very much. Very much indeed."

He spoke to me, but his thoughts were evidently busy elsewhere. Then—

"You know it is no crime to kill an outlaw."

The sentence was harsh. I have seen men killed. And maybe one or two will point a finger at me when we're all lined up for God to judge. But to murder in cold blood—not though the "outlaw" were my own enemy!

HIS saying that made me realize vividly, as I had not done before, how every hand was against Williams. It was no crime to kill him. The Law would bless his murderer with gold. If he bowed down and worshiped the Law, it would curse his murderer with the wrath of hemp.

"Thou shalt have no gods but my tablets," saith the Law.

A wise commandment, no doubt; but I know intimately whom it had banned, and the Law never recognizes personality—the only thing of value that a man can have. I could feel Davenant's sense of security. Cold and dark he stood, with his thumbs

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slipped into his side coat pockets, egging me on with that vindicating sentence, "It is no crime to kill an outlaw."

"I know. I know. But it's —— dangerous at times," I answered.

His eyes narrowed and he smiled the gleaming toothful smile through the crack that was his mouth, the mouth covered with black hair; and gave me a pitying, supercilious look.

"Not afraid, exactly," I explained. "But, you know, he pays well. Particularly those who strike at him—and miss!"

Said Davenant slowly, impressively, his eyes fast on me—

"I can pay ten times better than he."

Pause.

"Particularly those who back from a bargain!"

I wished that I were drunk. Curious little shivers ran up and down my back. I wasn't fashioned to fence threats with men, or do bold things. Put me out of a jesting humor and my tongue was thick as a knotted fist, but with no such force to it.

And this fellow seemed impalpably closing in on me, getting me clinched, getting my signature down in my own blood to a bargain of his own terms. Yet there was nothing tangible to protest against. The threat didn't frighten me.

But some way the joke I was playing on him did not seem to have so much of a point as I had expected. Any minute I could laugh and tell him he was a fool. That is, if I *could* laugh. But he seemed getting at me with something more than words.

"Who sups with the devil must have a long spoon," says the proverb.

I wriggled about a bit. I was not cultivating Davenant's intimacy for the pleasure of his company, or merely to laugh at him for a dupe. He was not the sort of man one laughs at, any more than was that dark niece of his one to be taunted. The same sinister strain was in them. Perhaps one could be an antidote for the other, as poison neutralizes poison.

My purpose was to ferret out Davenant's plans at Dakaru. Williams wanted to know. So did I. It was strange, the way he was trying to get there. It was more strange that he should be going at all.

I mentioned "rewards" and what hope of having them if we went on to Dakaru.

He mentioned the reward on Williams's head.

I replied that one didn't need lay a course for Dakaru to get that. No. It would be necessary to put about for Sydney. And as I would then be the only man on the ship who could navigate, why—there must need be inducements for going on to Dakaru.

He said the ship would be mine.

"When you haven't a clear title to give it to me—and Hawkins?"

I brought Hawkins in as a labored afterthought.

"Dakaru belongs to me and to my—to Dula Davenant. Wealth is there. You may help yourself."

A tempting offer, with Grahame and his savage overseers, armed, watchful, more watchful than on a previous visit.

I suggested that Grahame might not recognize the ownership or my right to compensation. I felt I was getting near to Davenant's secrecy.

"Grahame will have nothing to say," he replied irritably.

"That isn't like what Raikes told me," I flashed.

Just said it, without thinking. Raikes, of course, had told me nothing.

"What did Raikes tell you?" Davenant demanded, his head settling down slightly on his shoulder and his eyes catching hold of my face.

It was as if he looked from a mask. The same, or much the same, as Miss Davenant looked; as if a close-fitting mask were over the face and only the eyes revealed. Sometimes her eyes seemed half-hidden too.

"Ask him," I countered maliciously, feeling my spirits rise a little at having Davenant seem to be at a slight disadvantage.

"If Raikes told you the truth," he said slowly with something of menace in his voice—just whom the menace was directed at, would be hard to say—"you know why Dakaru belongs to me. That—" a sharp snap of finger and thumb—"for Raikes!"

"But that—" imitating the snap of finger and thumb—"won't impress Grahame."

"No. But this will."

He half-turned and pushed back the tail of his coat, and his hand touched the butt of a revolver.

It impressed me, too. It was not so much of a braggart's gesture as it may seem; for though it was, of course, deliberately

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theatrical, it was accompanied by that slow, white smile—a grin of villainy.

THE next few days we had our troubles. Hawkins said old Neptune had the stomachache.

I didn't know where we were, and much of the time I did not care. It was a case of water, water everywhere—and nothing to drink; for the perfidious Hawkins had raided my small store and been caught in the act by Raulson, the cook. Between them and the forecastle nothing was left but the carpenter's chest where I had cached a half-dozen bottles. And that was not left long. The wind came up out of a glowing sky some time near midnight and stripped the masts with thunderous booms, and away we went, scudding under bare poles. Great combers enveloped the *Sally Martin*, stamping her under. She was lifted and shaken, as if to jar her ballast and turn her keel to the clouds.

The masts had been stripped to the bolt-ropes, and every loose thing about the deck went over from the successive blows of wave on wave that came aboard like vast raiders. Overhead the thunder cracked and rolled, and not for a second through the hours that followed the first blast of the storm was there silence in the heaven. The long detonations peeled away reverberantly into the distance, and the incessant thrusts of lightning split the black sky above our heads.

Rain fell. It came in driving shafts of water, not as drops. By morning two boats were smashed, and the jolly-boat was gone from across the stern where she had been lashed.

The seas were tremendous. I was caught between the rails, and my lungs were strained to the bursting-point before the deck rose clear; and my arms were nearly jerked from their sockets as my hands held on, while feet and legs swayed about. Had the sea been enraged at the impudence of a few insects strutting about on a thing of wood, the waves could not have seemed more sentiently determined to pound us to pieces.

Two men went overboard and were swept away into the night of wild water with only the faintest of cry out of the darkness. The others tumbled into the flooded forecastle and stayed there.

There was no working the ship, not though we had all been able sailors. There was nothing to do. Aft we were all frightened, though some showed it in a way that others did not.

Probably because I was, I say the others were frightened. There is nothing I like more than a mild storm at sea, with the thunder comfortably in the distance, like deep reports from far battle-fields, with the waves surging and white, but not leaping the rail, a veritable host of watery pirates. But this mad storm shook my ribs clatteringly together.

Raikes and Hawkins and I, Miss Davenant and Davenant, in the fearful communion of those hours, stood about in the passageway like quiet strangers. That is, for a time—in the first appalling burst of the rage that shook heaven and sea, it seemed as if a second horde of evil angels were being driven out by the bolts of archangels.

Then Hawkins, nearly drunk and always weary on his feet, sat on the deck and soon sprawled in sleep, mumbling prayers and oaths in a nightmare of unrest. Raikes leaned nervously from side to side, his one glittering eye turning about like the gaze of a restless, trapped animal. From time to time he said it was "a —— of a night," indifferent as to whether he was answered or heard.

All of us were soaked, for all had rushed on deck at the first arousing blast; and a thin sheet of salt water swashed about our feet. Hawkins lay in it, head on arm, indifferently. Though the night was not cold, we were chilled; as nervousness leaves one chilled.

Davenant was dressed, even to shirt and coat, but not collar. It took such a storm to make him forgetful of his immaculate appearance. He stared from one to the other of us, and stood listening—until thrown off balance by the violent lurches of the ship.

He said little. I remember his asking me if we were "doomed."

"And damned," I answered.

"A —— of a night!" Raikes put in, aroused by the sound of voices.

"Do you think the ship will sink?" Miss Davenant asked me.

I was honest and told her that I thought it would. I did not see how we could go long with such wind and waves without being piled on to a reef.

I did not explain all that to her, but I

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judged we were somewhere between 18 and 23 degrees South and not more than three or four hundred miles off the mainland; and there are enough reefs and islands scattered about in those waters to wreck all the navies of the world in a week of bad nights; and there is something in the midst of a storm that makes one feel it will never end, that the order of nature has been changed, that the ship is dead and forever damned.

"Yes," I told her.

It may have been the heroic part for me to have assured her otherwise, to have given her hope and all that which brave men do for fair women in times of peril. But she did not need my words. She took my answer with a steady look and shook her head slightly. No. She knew we would not.

It was not fear of death that made her hope; I remembered afterward that she was a fatalist. The earth can blow up, the sky cave in, but the fatalists have counted the sands that mark the hour and know that one by one the little grains must trickle through before Death dares smite the glass.

HER hair was loose. It had evidently been caught up in one swift swoop and pinned carelessly. She wore her cape, and under it the silken, thin hem of a nightgown hung. It touched the deck unless held up, and when she was thrown and put out her hands to steady and catch herself it fell to the water.

Her stockingless feet were thrust into slippers. Through one of the slits in her cape her bare arm was extended, bracing herself now here, now there.

She was afraid, of course. We all were: anybody would have been; anybody always is in conditions of the kind, though there was none of that panicky excitement or agitation that traditionally—and seldom in reality—goes with fear. The man who has no fear in him is a clod. And she was vibrant, strung taut, her black eyes widened into a kind of unaffected wonder.

A few times her hand flew to her ear to shut out the immensity of heaven's thunder that seemed striking the deck. At such stunning, deafening, ear-crashing peals, that came stroke on stroke like the ragged volley of monstrous cannon fired within arm's reach overhead, I flinched as from an impending blow.

Two lanterns swung from beams, but the lightning, as if passing through the calked seams, reached our eyes dazzlingly, reached mine even through tightened lids.

Once, half-blinded by the sudden, instantaneous glare that, streaming like the swish of a flaming sword close as to strike off the end of a nose, came through the skylight, I tightened my eyes, turned my face down and pressed against them with both fists. And the ship lay on her beams' end.

Miss Davenant was flung against me. I caught her with circling arms. We slipped unsteadily, half-fell, and rocked with the righting of the ship—my arm still about her. It is difficult to speak of that half-minute and say what I mean, and not convey to too susceptible imaginations something that I did not mean. The contact *was* thrilling, but in some way not personal. When I dropped my arm she stepped back with a little laugh. There was no embarrassment about her, no thanks. And the laugh was not merriment so much as a kind of nervousness—something so natural as to be strange. Strange because I had been more than a little awed by her; awed by the embodied mystery and aloofness of her.

But her body was soft and warm—a woman's. No one noticed, though Davenant and Raikes could scarcely have helped seeing.

Hawkins rolled willy-nilly, grunted and swore; half-raising himself, he looked about in a stupid daze, damned wind, sea, ship and fell drowsily against the bulkhead. He soon slipped prone, and slept.

She probably did not give the slight incident a second's thought. But I was awakened, made aware that for all of her pose and stiffness, her tragic aspect, she was a woman; that her flesh was not marble, that her breath was warm.

Yet the psychic distance between us was not decreased. She had fallen against me as she might have fallen against a stanchion; and laughed as she might have laughed then at her awkward mishap.

But I had seen behind her mask—not necessarially understanding her the better for it. A woman whose body is heated by heart-beats, who is in spite of her rôle not the character she plays, is more intricate and bewildering than even a symbol.

At the risk of being misunderstood, I

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put it down that I liked her—without, perhaps, thinking any the better of her. I mean that I knew she was dangerous, I felt that she was wicked; but somehow I realized that it was not the cold, dispassionate fierceness of mere wickedness. In other words, that she was human.

A slight occasion for such subtle perceptions, no doubt. But I say that no man, whether by a moment's inadvertence or an evening's coaxing, ever embraced a woman without being the wiser for it. Some definite, convincing — though not necessarially correct—stimulus struck through his myriad surface nerves and, most often, reached his heart; or as in my case, threw strong, though rather confused, impressions on his mind.

Or, to make all this abracadabraic phrasing simple, I felt she was not—as I had feared—a mad woman. That two seconds of nervous, almost girlish, laughter was sane. And the way she drew from me was spontaneous, unaffected. Those were the only utterly natural things I had seen from her. Then too her body had been soft, pliant, warm.

I knew she was a murderess, but somehow those impressions dulled, blurred the knowledge. Besides, there was a storm overhead; and incidents of only casual significance hit with dominant vividness, take on undue importance, at such time.

I WENT up the companion and slipped the cover slightly. Nothing was visible except under the flashes of lightning, too often blinding; only there was visible occasionally the spectral white outline of a foam-crested wave that washed up out of the darkness. Wind, water and thunder filled the air; I doubted not that they filled the universe with stormy orchestration.

I tried to tell myself that death under the volleying thunders of Heaven's cannon, with the sea piling mountains of water for the grave-mound, with the epitaph scrawled in slithering foam, was death and nothing more or less than if one died abed.

However, as a philospher I was a failure. It was no use to assure myself that though all the artillery of a nation might speak at the death of a king, and architects heap marble monuments over him, and poets write their fine lines for bronze tablets, yet all this would wear away and Judgment Dawn would find his burial-ground no more identified than a grave on the sea's bottom.

Had I been abed, with a charitable priest praying God to condone my sins, I would probably have thought what a miserable way for me to salute Death, and wanted to go down at sea with the full majesty of storm heralding the end.

The truth is, of course, that I didn't want anything to do with death; and just at that minute I could not remember any of those comforting maxims of philosphers that make a healthy man on a quiet day so reconciled to the embrace of the so-called Dark Angel's fleshless arms. Not much. I wanted a warm inn and a rainy night, some dear and careless maiden with bright eyes to click a stone mug with mine and join in the chorus of some deep-throated song that told the devil to go to hell and stay there.

I had no hope. Something more than the tossing ship, the flying wind and low-bent clouds puffing thunder and lighting, had got into me. I was frightened by an inner sense of tragedy as well as by the awful and more theatric fulminations, concatenations, bombilations, topsy-turvy flings of wood and water, and general uproar and outburst, as if Omnipotence were in an ultimate rage.

Perhaps my sense of the dramatic made me feel that God would not skimp his climax. He had a ship-load of Jonahs and an ocean of whales, but nobody to throw us overboard into their mouths—so down must go the ship and all of us end our evil lives.

Evil, evil, evil? And what had we done?

Drunk, stolen and fought, and neglected to pray except at such moments as this—when the forgotten prayers could not be remembered.

I wondered if Williams prayed. There at helm he stood, feet lashed to the bolted grating, his hands clinched at the wheel-spokes. The poop was fairly clear of the water, but waves hit him, rushed over him, pulled, wrested and tugged at him, again and again.

He did nothing more there than a lashing on the helm could have done, would have done. He had to go before the wind though we went out of his course, and except for the flares of lightning he could not see forward of mizzen; nor was there a lookout.

It always seemed incredible that a ship, any man's ship, even one of the monstrous

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modern screw-driven ironclads, could live through a real storm. By ——, the ocean is big; its depth would engulf the highest mountain-range nor leave a peak to mark the spot; all the dry land of earth could be shoveled into the seven seas, eaten, absorbed, vanished. And men treat that old ocean with a kind of insolent familiarity; pit their wood and will against it—and win.

Williams was out there perfectly aware that he could do nothing, except by the luckiest of chances. Even so he went through his days, and nights, seemingly without fear or hope. Just determination. Determination to go on, as if it were the fight and not the end, not the winning, that concerned him.

He had something in him that answered every challenge, even that of such a night as this. He would not quit, he would not shirk, he would not lash the helm and go below, trusting his luck and God. He may have had more faith in God than that—faith that He would not refuse good fortune to one who made the utter effort.

I doubt if Williams ever thought of God. Perhaps the men who serve Him most do not; at least the canting, prayful kind, the melancholic brotherhood so concerned with what is righteous and what is not, and praising God as courtiers do a crotchety king, appear to my biased eyes as serving Him less than laying up riches and honor for *themselves* in heaven—the merchant princes of Eternity! But myself being one of the unregenerate of the earth, of course I am full of hope that by some inadvertence I shall have a harp and crown without having worked for it.

I WAS aware of somebody standing beside me, pushing against me, and recognized Dula Davenant. For some time we stood peering like peepers that had come upon fearful mysteries, our eyes just above the lowered companion cover.

The sea was a thousand molten hills. Lightning laced the sky with fiery chords, vanishing in half-seconds, but illuminating —more illuminating than if the noon sun had been instantly turned on and off by one of the modern electric buttons.

Thunders smote. Wind roared. Clouds of flying spray rose to meet the rain—downpouring as if all the deep-bottomed vessels of the sky were being emptied.

"Oh, this is wonderful—wonderful!" she half-sobbed.

I twisted myself around and tried to look at her.

"Wonderful;" she spoke as if overcome by some stage spectacle.

I demanded what she would call terrible. I did not speak in any conversational spirit. I was irritated; or at least irritation must have been the basis of my feeling. There I was, frightened, shaken, by as fierce a storm as ever smote the sea—or I was willing to believe that it was—and she was admiring it.

She perhaps did not hear my question. Anybody who could not hear the terrible menace of the shrieking wind and solid blows of the water, beating like a legion of rams against our frail wooden walls, should not have been expected to hear absurd questions.

Presently—

"This is the first thing of my life that has wholly satisfied me."

She was not talking to me. But I leaned close to her ear and shouted—

"In what way?"

I was interested.

"And all you men are down here!"

There was a queer mingling of scorn and admiration in that. Evidently she was not in a mood to be questioned. Or maybe she really did not hear, her attention being concentrated.

Williams's was a striking figure amid the hurricane. He stood rigid as if cast in bronze, and naked except for trousers cut away at the knees.

The deck rose and fell, down, down, down with the long slow drop of a pitching ship, then up as if being raised to the clouds. From time to time the water came over with a hoarse, engulfing rush and buried him to his waist, to his neck, occasionally covering him from sight. It was a distinct surprize to see him emerge each time, though I knew very well he could not be swept away. There was nothing courageous in his being there, though she thought it was the height of heroism. There was, however, a good deal of that strange quality of his which seemed to seize on the hardest, most grinding strain, and meet it.

Being covered and lost under water meant nothing to him. He was a good deal like a porpoise. But the blow of the water —that was something.

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"I couldn't be afraid with——"

Her sentence stopped. The deck had been boarded by a moving mountain. I shot the cover fast to keep from being drenched.

At once her hands were pushing against it frantically.

"Let me see! Quick. I'm afraid—I must see!"

"Want to be drowned?"

"He'll be drowned!"

"No more 'an a fish."

"Open this——"

She pushed at me.

"You cowards!"

"Water—through here—smother us."

"Open it!"

Her fists were beating against the cover.

"He's all right."

"Open it! Why don't you open it!"

"Now listen——"

"Open it! Open it! Open it!"

From below Davenant called up apprehensively to know what was the matter.

I looked over my shoulder. Raikes had taken a step up the companion.

"You get back," I shouted.

He stepped irresolutely down.

Miss Davenant had stopped talking and was struggling. Savagely, as if struggling for air, she pushed and beat and jabbed. Her strength was surprizing.

She slipped the cover. The mountain had slid off. The deck was clear of water.

In a flare of lightning Williams was still there as if he had passed through nothing more than a wisp of fog. He was leaning slightly forward, eyes set to pierce the darkness, or rather to catch the farthest distance in the quick thrusts of lightning.

"Can't I go out there?" she asked.

She didn't expect me to say anything other than, "No." At least I was sure she didn't. So I said:

"Of course. You'll be carried over quicker 'an you can ask God for mercy."

"I'll never ask for mercy!"

It sounded as if she was speaking between clinched teeth. Perhaps she was. The surprizes of her were infinite. That was a crazy thing to say at such a time.

"What would you do out there?"

"I would feel at home—at last!"

She said it almost gaily, in sudden good humor, but not as pleasantry. I believe she meant it. Perhaps the repressed, tearing, destructive powers within her found expression in the unlimited noise of sky and surge of water.

There is nothing intelligible about women when they break, as most of them do at some time or other, from under the seal of Solomon, or of other wise men, fathers brothers, husbands; and like the jinn out of the fisherman's bronze bottle, take on the strange shapes and release stranger forces which, since they are common to almost all women, must be called natural.

I said something about being afraid, that it was surprizing in her not being; and asked if she did not know what fear was. It was a good chance for her to assume conceited falsehoods and deny it. But she did not. She said that she had been afraid all of her life—but never in thunderstorms.

"I am terribly afraid of *him!*" she whispered in a hurried confessional, jerking her head slightly to indicate the foot of the stairs.

At that moment, and for that moment only, she seemed young, girlish. I have often wondered as to her age.

"Raikes?"

"No-no!"

Then, whispered with teeth shut—

"The black beast!"

"Davenant?"

Maybe she nodded, or it may have been the jerk of the ship. And the sudden warning *shh-sh-h* may not have, possibly did not, come from her. The water hissing about the deck and the sibilant spray may have made the sound. My imagination, being nimble, often plays tricks.

"They can't hear us. Why?" I asked.

"No." Then with cutting indifference—

"He is no worse than others."

NOT dawn, but a barely palpable gray, oozed out of the black sky. The thunders were being withdrawn to a distance, like a retreating rear-guard. The wind, dying, was still a whistling blast, but not a fury. The sea was wild, moving forward with billowing rushes; and the *Sally Martin* went with it, headlong, plunging and rearing.

I had been up and down the companion several times, restlessly wondering what to do. I was tired and I ached, and there was no place for rest.

Raikes had disappeared, probably to his bunk, where no doubt he lay in wet clothes. Davenant sat on a chair by the doorway

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of his cabin, looking worn and drawn, but watchfully waiting for—what?

Probably at the back of his head had been the vague idea of taking to the boats if the ship floundered. It would have been as safe to cling to a pine-knot on a lake of fire. Besides, the boats were smashed.

It was as well. They couldn't have lived in such a sea; and with such a crew of lubbers would certainly have been swamped in lowering.

Where did these people get their vitality, I wondered. For two hours Miss Davenant had been standing on the companion. Williams, of course—I was not surprized at anything he did. I sometimes thought that he sought exhaustion in any way and form the better to sleep.

Hawkins had more than vitality; he had a magic sense of oblivion. He simply had drawn a little circle around himself and shut the night terrors out. Not altogether, though, for there had been mumbled oaths.

I came down and put a foot into his ribs.

I told him this wouldn't do. He stirred, rumbling mightily, and put his hands to his head, groaning.

"I wish it had been poison," I said.

He had, I am sure, drunk at least two quarts the previous evening—and all it did was make him drowsy. He smacked his dry lips, wanting water.

"We came near throwing you over to lighten ballast," I said.

"Why didn't you?" he growled. "I'm sick man. Lord, what's happenin' *now?*"

A ton of water came down the stairs, and a shout from the deck above. The schooner rocked drunkenly, bobbing in a seaway. A fine jamboree. I looked up the companion. The cover was off. Miss Davenant was not in sight.

As I started up I glanced sidewise and carried with me an impression of Davenant's indignant, astonished face, the salt spray dripping from his black beard. He was wet as a drowned cat, and seemed to have a feline aversion to the water—at least on his beard.

Again the shout from the deck. It was Williams calling.

Up I tumbled with a hundred fears at my throat, and not one of them shameful. I was sure Dula Davenant had been washed over. She wasn't, but I came near being, for I leaped out into a waist-high wave—much of which went on down the companion and threw Davenant, who was following, back against Hawkins.

The booming oaths of Hawkins rose above the seething and splash of water. I heard them from where I was stranded—with a whole side of ribs apparently broken—against the rail.

For a moment my sense of sight was confused; I saw so much at once. For one thing there in the misty haze of a black morning, on our lee, a mile or so ahead, lay wallowing helplessly what had been a proud full-rigger. She lay half-under, stern down, probably from a leak and shifted ballast, and slowly turned around and round—a living derelict.

The mainmast had perhaps been sprung, and cut away. At least it was gone, and the others remained. Some of the sails were furled, and others were gone with only wisps of flying rope. She had evidently been caught by surprize.

There were clusters of black spots in the fore-rigging where the crew hung like insects. Below them wolfish waves leaped; yes, with even foam-flecked jaws.

But I turned my eyes from the foundering ship to look at our own helm, where Williams stood with his arms actually about Dula Davenant. What really happened of course I never knew. But I did know about the only thing that could have happened.

Perhaps with the lessening rage of the sea she peered farther and farther out, until—either reckless or catching sight of the wrecked ship—she ran on deck. A wave caught her, and she was swept or struggled close enough for Williams to snatch her.

In doing so he let go the helm, and the schooner promptly veered. There was no other way for him to hold her and grasp the helm too, than by pressing her between wheel and his breast; and he had shouted.

It may have been mean of me; it may have been even a little vicious; but said I to myself, even as I pressed a hand to my aching side—

"A woman gets what she wants though men die and ships go down, though sky and sea clamor and fight."

Further meditations were interrupted. Davenant and Hawkins and Raikes were on deck, scrambling and sliding about, and grasping whatever they could to hold on, and staring across to the wreck.

"McGuire!"

Williams did not need add—

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"Come here and take this woman."

He conveyed it in one word. With much wavering I made it across the deck, and caught her arm and waist.

"I won't go down there," she said firmly, holding back.

She was soaking wet. Even the heavy cape sought clingingly the curves of her body.

"It's dangerous——"

'I don't care."

It wasn't stubbornness. It was intention. She did not intend to go below—and she didn't.

At that moment if Williams had said to throw her overboard I would have been pleased. It was for a raging second precisely what I wanted to do.

I let go, throwing up all responsibility for her. She could do as she pleased. She braced herself between the companion and skylight and remained there, all eyes.

No ribs of mine were broken, but it would have made no difference had they been. Williams gave me the wheel and cut himself loose from the grating. He said to let her drift down as close to the wreck as was safe.

"For God's sake, you're not goin' to try——"

But he was gone.

SEAS were still coming at intervals over the waist, but he plunged forward, roused the forecastle, broke out hawsers, bent an end to a spar and cast it over in the desperate, mad hope of having it drift down against the wreck. It was dangerous business, as well as seemingly futile.

In the first place there was little more than blind luck to carry us near enough; and being carried that near gave the risk of collision. Moreover the chance of any man leaping into the water and reaching the hawser or spar was not to be thought of; and of living through it, if he did, was even less to be believed.

But the excitement of the chance got into us. For the first time, and that after a wearing, dispiriting night, there was rushing and eagerness among the men as they anxiously paid out the hawser and calculated the diminishing distance. The sodden stern of the wreck, so low in the water that the mizzen-yards were under, gave her a slower drift.

There is something eternal in men that makes them strive to help the danger-stricken; an ennobling quality that may be sheltered from view for the better part of a lifetime, but it appears with a sudden flare of courage when the risk is greatest, the chance least hopeful. Strangers all; and when one ship comes down on another in distress, the daring sacrifice is made.

The yearning to help is intense, often more overpowering than the desire to live—a thing scarcely believable unless one reflects on the records, authenticated, of the sea. The ocean is a fearful mistress, and her lovers must be fierce men, ready to pay with flesh, blood and bones—as in the wooing of other mistresses they pay with their gold and their honor—and there is no jealousy between them, at least not in the midst of danger.

All that we could do had been done. And our crew waited, sometimes breast deep in water, unnoticing, indifferent.

A faint cheer, scarcely more than a distant echo, came from the rigging. It was thanks rather than hope; and acknowledgment of what, to those poor devils anyway, seemed chivalrous. It was more than chivalry. It was madness.

As we drifted closer and I hastily put down the helm, Williams said to let her drift, to collide with the wreck rather than miss it. One minute it looked as if a collision was unavoidable, the next that we would go by far out of reach. If we hit the wreck, we ourselves would be one; but Williams had a way of daring anything.

On such occasions seconds become appreciable periods of time. They are so filled with feeling, with eagerness.

The ocean is maddening in drawing out its strain on men's hearts. Its tragedies are usually slow. Fire breaks out and may last a day, or days. A ship that is lost takes, usually, many hours to fill and sink while men climb topmast yards as if to be nearer heaven with their prayers. Storm-driven, a ship sights breakers ahead, and nothing is possible but to wait, minute on minute, till she strikes—or, by a miracle, misses.

Strange that the reliant, defiant, hard-fighting, audacious breed of seamen should be the ones who most frequently are stricken numb, or might as well be, certainly rendered powerless, while the forces about them move on slowly, inevitably, to the sad end or to the miracle.

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So we drifted down on the wreck—we, shipping a sea at every roll, came broadside, rocking down the seaway. The spar, though cast astern, being lighter, floated more rapidly.

There was a chance that the hawser would come in contact with the wreck as we drifted by. There was also the hope that the spar would get caught in the wreck's rigging, and we would have a slightly better chance of getting some of the crew on board—if the hawser did not part, as it would be almost sure to do in that sea, with the wreck holding back.

There were all kinds of chances, but what must have been the sensation of the fifteen or twenty men in the rigging? Invisible dice were being shaken for their lives. No, not even a miracle could save them all. Perhaps nothing mortal could save any of them.

From the time we had first seen them they had hung in the rigging, motionless or scarcely stirring—like flies on a screen in the cold. As they saw what was trying to be done, there was movement among them.

The ship had unmistakably been settling. She was now more than half under and her deck had a sharper slant, and the foremast was at times—in the course of the ship's slow, weary plunges, as if she was very tired and hope-forsaken—fairly parallel with the ocean. Her bows were thrust sharply out of the water.

In her slow turning around, like a water-top making its last, reeling revolutions, the upreared forecastle completely cut off from view the fore-rigging; then, the men coming into view again, we could see them scrambling about. There was a movement among them to get out on the yard, a cluster of forms; and one, two, three, dropped into the water. Distinct cries were heard.

"My God!" roared Hawkins. "They're fightin'!"

They were.

We were only some two hundred or less yards off and could see plainly that those poor doomed wretches, right on the edge of life's end, were fighting madly to get out on the yard to what seemed to them the best position from which to jump for the black thread with the tooth-pick attached. Some were knocked off. Some jumped with the hope of scrambling up the forecastle to the bowsprit. None made it. For an instant we could see bodies tossed sprawlingly on a wave's crest, then submerged.

"Look at the big fellow—they're pullin' him off——"

"He's fallin'— No— There!"

"Ow!"

A man whom the others seemed instinctively to have turned on had been beating his way out on the yard-arm. He was pushed off his balance and seemed falling but caught himself and jerked down one above him who had kicked out.

Agilely the big man was back on the yard, enemies on both sides—but they were afraid. Foot by foot he worked himself out, turning every second to strike at any who came within reach from behind.

He moved on toward the two men in front. These gave way. They were crowded out—right out to the end, and among the cries heard seemed cries for mercy.

Perhaps not. Then the man on the extreme end turned against his companion; he aided the big fellow in throwing off the one between them. That is what it looked like.

Cries of anger went up from our deck, and I detected the sharp, quick, fierce exclamation of Dula Davenant under, rather than above, the voices of the others, of whom Hawkins's was the loudest. There were angry, outraged cries, too, from the rigging.

But the man on the extreme end, if his purpose had been to placate the big fellow, gained nothing. The two bodies were merged for a moment, turned on the yard, heads down and legs encircling it—then one fell away.

The big fellow clawed himself up, twisted his head around and shook his fist at men behind him who had started out, but dared not come close. As he shook his fist he must have yelled a curse, for seconds later—after the fist was lowered and he had faced around, looking for the drifting spar—the oath reached us.

The other end of the yard was covered with men, and slowly the wreck revolved. Luck was to determine who should have the better chance.

It was now clear that the hawser would strike against the ship, but the heavy hawser sagged so low in the water that it would probably do no service as a thing to hold on to. The ship was going lower and lower, so slowly as to be imperceptible

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except by the higher reach of the waves as they leaped for the yard, hungrily.

A turn was taken around our mast and Williams, calculating how much to take in so as to bring the spar against the wreck, to give the men something graspable to leap for, had the hawser hauled in. Our deck was slippery and rocking.

The sea was running high but steadily, and the poop was flooded with spray, but no more big waves came over. If they had, the *Sally Martin* would have gone on her way alone.

The men gave a hand with a hearty shout. Even Davenant pulled, though without the shout. Hawkins laid his enormous weight against the line, and little Raikes yelled cheerily. To pull a hundred yards of hawser with a stop-water bent to it is work for a capstan, or better, for a donkey-engine.

Miss Davenant was shivering. Her face was pale, her lips blue, actually blue as indigo. But from the way she looked at that hawser and the struggling, tugging men I knew that under her cape her hands were clenched and that she strained with them.

THE spar actually struck the protruding keel of the wreck, coming almost directly below the yard where half a dozen men clung in a desperate companionship. Before it struck some had jumped—and were at once swirled away by the eager water.

It was not easy to be sure of what one saw in that brief time and amid that boiling foam and those lunging waves; but it seemed that two or three caught hold, and again and again it appeared that all were shaken off. They were so covered with water that one could not tell. Probably one *was* crushed, as it appeared when the spar bumped into the wreck.

We could distinctly hear men left in the rigging praying—and one strong voice cursing.

The wreck was setting with that—no, this isn't a freak phrase—with that slow rapidity that comes over a ship, which, having struggled valiantly, gives up. That is, it sank steadily, perceptibly, and yet with a slowness that eminently befits the inevitable. There is no need for haste in doom.

We feared and with reason as the ship was now rapidly sinking that the spar would get caught in the rigging and be drawn down. Another five minutes and the proud four-master would be a memory. If none came from her deck to ours, we would have to assure one another that the sight of her had not been a dream; that we really saw it. So completely, with such utter finality, does the ocean wipe out her tragedies.

There was one man left on that wreck who did not yield to the decisions of fortune. Luck decreed that he should be left dangling from the lee side when the spar came within reach; but luck seems to have been meant for those who do not care to put forward their own efforts.

He fought his way across that yard as he had not fought before. Men too timid to leap for the water and snatch at the only chance—no matter how desperate—to be rescued, were scarcely of the fiber to stop so determined a man as himself.

He smote and pushed. Fellows—so it seemed—who would not jump for the chance of being saved fell away, frightened, to escape his blows.

It may be that they had reached a suicidal despair, and plunged out of life to escape a last buffeting from heavy fists. No doubt they had had enough of blows. Most men have had enough to win tears from Heaven.

Let up hope the records are honest that tell of suffering as well as of sin. If so, there will be roistering songs echoed through the marble halls, and strange-looking saints rolling drunkenly down the Golden Street.

That big man did not hesitate. He leaped, and we could tell that he missed. As if to taunt him, a wave's crest flung the spar up so that for an instant it seemed suspended in air, and the figure of another man was hanging there wildly, almost as formless as a rag.

But the man of a dozen battles in the rigging had not jumped to drown. He must have been a powerful swimmer. He drove for that spar as a man fights for life; and that was what he fought for.

"Slack away!" Williams cried.

And the hawser was paid out to give more drift to the spar; but before the line paid out had affected the position of the spar, the man had reached it. He clinched one arm about it, threw his feet over, and raised the other arm in a gesture of triumph. We heard his shout.

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The next instant we saw that he was alone on the spar. I thought to myself, grudgingly admiring him, that he must be amphibian; perhaps scales were on his body. He was under water more than above it. How he managed to breathe I do not know.

Scientific men in their wisdom say that the rudimentary gills, inherited from piscatorial ancestors, are in the throats of all of us. I sometimes suspected natives of using those gills still; they seemed so indifferent as to whether they were under water or had their noses out. Williams was like that, too. And this man.

Williams again was tense and active. His words cracked. Men jumped, not through fear but eagerness.

"Throw your weight to it men. Heave-o! Now, altogether. Heave-o! Now—heave-o!"

And each heave-o was answered with a chorus of strained grunts. Hawkins, with a turn of the hawser about his enormous body, braced himself like an anchor with feet against the coaming of the companion, and took up and held all the slack that came over the taffrail.

The spar now trailed dead astern, and we had passed the wreck. Williams stood first to the hawser, and after him a line of men like a tug-of-war team. At times the sea seemed to snap the spar back, and the hawser hummed out of the water, shivering spray; and at such moments, Williams and the others would have been forced to let the line play out except for Hawkins, braced like a mud-hook in a rock-pile.

The pull of the hawser and spar assisted me materially at the helm in bringing the schooner around so that the wind was astern, and the sickening, unsteadying roll as she had drifted down in the seaway was gone. I had my head turned over my shoulders most of the time. It may have been bad seamanship, but I never claimed—except deceitfully to Davenant—to have any other kind.

The wreck went down very slowly, but down, down, down, with sodden heaviness; and there were still figures in the rigging. When only the tip of the forecastle was visible the water about it was suddenly flung up as from an explosion. I had heard that decks blew up from air-pressure in sinking ships, but I had thought it one of the many myths of the sea.

But there was more than the burst of water; a sullen, smothered roar followed, and the ship vanished—even the mast going hastily out of sight from where, for an instant, it had alone been visible like a desperate imploring arm.

No wreckage that I noticed came up; and for a few moments there was a white surge of waters, as if the wolf-waves had bent their heads to the feast. Then the high swells rolled over and over the spot, scattering the swirl of foam, and there was no mark or sign to tell where the mighty ship had gone. Only one left of her crew, and he was smotheringly wrapped about a piece of wood, from which any moment he might be washed.

"Was what he did murder?"

The question without being invited yelped at my thoughts.

"Was it murder to hasten by two ticks of the clock the death of doomed men? Murder to knock the weaker aside—who would have failed had they tried it—and snatch his own life from the sea?

"I don't envy God," I said to myself.

It was not blasphemy to think of what He must decide in that Great Judgment Hall.

I FELT that the man would never be brought on deck. Someway it seemed to me that, for one thing, Fate was too ironical to allow success to such overweening impudence from mere men.

Fate might, in her cynical mood, bring our ship out of the night to sight the wreck; permit the incredible chance of hawser and wood to drift through a storming sea and reach that wreck; let one man of a score kick his fellows and Death, too, aside and beat through the waves to grasp that wood, and let him hang on until he was within reach of grasping, succoring arms—then pluck him off.

But as much as she had meddled with him, Fate did not know Hurricane Williams. That—a flip of a finger—for her; as for any of her sex. Fate was too feminine to have his respect.

Believe it or not, I don't care. But Williams in his madness probably guessed what Fate intended: that the man, weakened, half—more than half—strangled, would be shaken off when he was raised between water and deck. He would probably slip down the spar as a ring from a stick.

I am not telling this to be believed. I am

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telling it so I shall never have to reproach myself for shunning the truth for fear of being thought a liar.

What happened was this: When the hawser had been hauled in so that the man lay almost under our stern, and he made no move, gave no recognition of his near safety, and could not be aroused by shouts, but hung on as if frozen there in the death-grip, then Williams—carrying a line, but with none about him—slipped down that hawser, into the sea, and made the line fast about the body of the unconscious man. It is simple to tell it; and landsmen may believe it.

Then Williams, hand over hand, climbed up that swaying, rocking hawser, being bumped and battered against the ship, and was seized and dragged on board by the eager arms of men who had cursed him hourly from that Australian night when he had herded them on to a stolen ship. Together, hawser and line were hauled up; and the man *did* slip from the spar, and but for the line about his waist he would have plunged into the sea. His body was actually cramped rigid in the position of arms and legs circling the spar—such had been his determination to hang on. And he was dragged on board the *Sally Martin* a drowned man.

"Fate wins!" I said to myself.

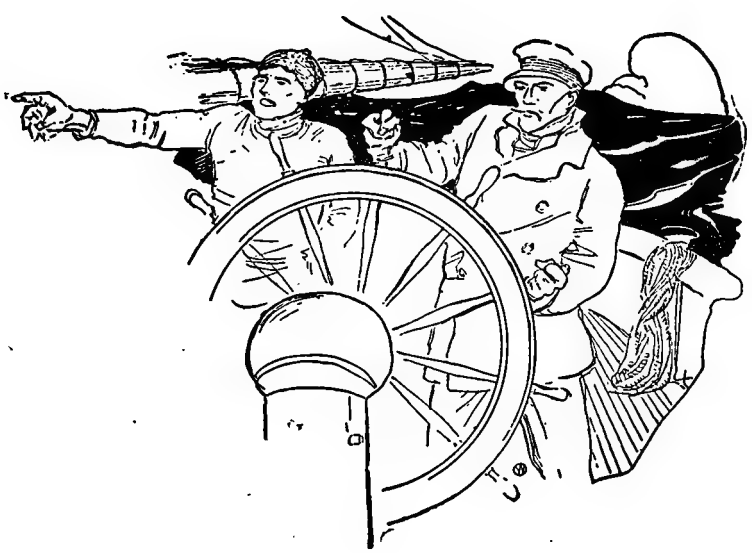
But mere drowning was nothing to Williams. Feverishly he worked and set others to work, and they rubbed and slapped those big limbs into relaxation.

The body was lifted face down so that water ran from the man's throat and nose, and for three unyielding hours men were kept at work over that unconscious figure—long after it began to breathe they rubbed and moved the arms to aid the lungs.

And not for a moment of any of that time was Dula Davenant off the deck. Her cheeks were no longer pale. They were flushed.

So it was that "Red" Shaylor, mate of the *Roanoke*, bound from San Francisco to Sydney, came on board the *Sally Martin*.

TO BE CONTINUED



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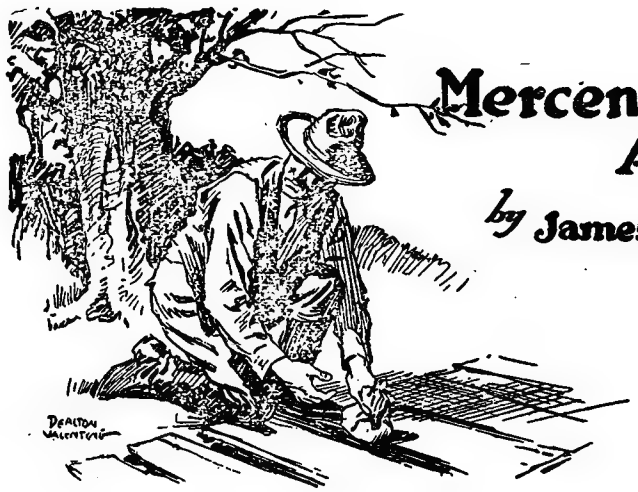

Mercenary Ambitions

by James Ellsworth Noel

"THIS here job of shovelin' muck don't hold no more charms for me, and I'm goin' to disconnect with it pretty sudden," says Pete as we sat there on the dump absorbing the sunshine and viewing the landscape.

"You're not going to quit as soon as I come on the job, are you, Pete?" I asked.

"No, it ain't that; I don't like to quit a new foreman. I've been at it three years now, and it's about got my goat."

Pete reached for his hip pocket and brought a cob pipe to view. Then he fumbled in the breast pocket of his blue-flannel shirt. There was nothing there, so I hand him my tobacco-pouch.

As he lights up, Pete remarks—

"You're a new man here, and of course you don't know I once owned a half-interest in this mine."

"No," I answered, "I've never heard of it. How did you happen to shift it on to some one else?"

"That was easy," Pete laughs. "This here mine makes a hundred thousand a year now."

When Pete has his corn-cob seething like a blast-furnace he seems to want to talk.

"If you don't mind, I'll tell you about it," he says.

"Sure, I'd like to hear it," I reply.

ABOUT six years ago (he begins) I forms a partnership with a capitalist. He furnishes a grubstake and I'm to locate a mine. When the mine's located we're to be joint owners of her.

I locates the mine on them terms, after climbin' and reclimbin' mountains for pretty near two years. But when I finds the outcroppin' she don't look good to me.

A few days after I'd showed my capitalist partner a sample of the quartz I brought in, I meets him on the street. That was at Pineknot, down the river. There was no town here then—never would have been a town here if it wasn't for the mine.

My partner extends the hand of copartnership and we shake like prosperous mine-owners. He invites me over to the Red Devil bar for social purposes. Pat Harrigan, the proprietor, waits on us and we consume a lot of liquor in the course of our remarks to each other.

My partner gets in such a liquid state of mind that I entertain the idea of unloadin' my half of the mine on to him at a fair profit. At first I put the idea away as a temptation, but it comes back. It keeps on comin' back every time I push it away.

I take some more liquor to brace me. It don't seem to help any, so I give up and fall to the idea.

I touch the subject soft-like to make sure his wits is all in the air. When I see he's safe to handle I explain in a good imitation of salesman's language how he can stack up by takin' over my half of the mine. He don't seem to savvy at first—leans against the bar and tells me to drink my own liquor; says he can't drink any more than his share.

I don't feel like doin' it, seein' how helpless he is, but I know there ain't no better

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market than he is just then. I push my feelin's into a back seat again, and set the price at three thousand dollars.

I take him over to Star Pander's law office and Pander fixes up the papers. His hand wabbles all over the paper before he gets it steady enough to sign.

Then he tells Pander to make out a check for three thousand dollars, and he signs it in the same wabbly way. When I get that check I head for the bank with no lost motion. Star Pander follows me over to tell 'em it's all right.

I go home feelin' pretty well heeled, and exchange matrimonial passwords with my wife like it was the first week we're married. She looks sad at first, for she lays it to liquor. When I pull out the roll Maggie brightens up and smiles.

"It's for the mine," I says.

Then we count the money, which is twenty hundred-dollar bills and twenty fifty-dollar bills. We don't get it to tally at first, but after a half-dozen counts we agree it's three thousand dollars.

Maggie puts the money in a fruit-jar and sets the jar on the top shelf of the cupboard, back in the corner where it's out of sight.

Maggie gets an extra good supper and while we eat we lay plans to buy a ranch when we get enough more to put with it. We even pick out the ranch we want.

Say, you can see it from here. See the white house with the red barn to the right? That's the place.

Well, the next day I meet my former partner. He's in his right mind again and as cheerful as a new daddy. We shake hands.

"Did I buy some mining property from you?" he asks. "Among my papers is a deed to certain mining properties, signed by you."

"Don't you recollect the deal?" I ask him.

"Sure," he laughs. "It was the easiest deal I ever put through. Kind of easy for you too, wasn't it?" he laughs at me.

"You're welcome," I hand him. "Maybe you fancy you put one over on me, but time'll tell."

Time has told all right. When I got the three thousand dollars I said to myself—

"Now, Pete, you'll soon be on a ranch, your own ranch, livin' like God intended man to live."

If it wasn't for a weakness for gamblin' I'd be on a ranch to-day—would have been there for the last three years.

After I made the mine deal it don't take long for it to circulate around that I outwitted a capitalist and has a neat bunch of dough for experimental purposes.

One day I meet "Long Judy" on Main Street, casual-like. He shakes my hand good and long and congratulates me for havin' good business sense. We walk along like two long-separated brothers that has just met for reunion purposes.

When we arrive at the door of the Red Devil we untangle from each other and go in and commence to deplete Pat Harrigan's liquor reserves. There ain't no loafin' on the job till we get our imaginations pretty well worked up. Then we ease off on the drinks and do some speech-makin' stunts to entertain some fellow citizens that has congregated at the Red Devil.

The program bein' finished, Long Judy whispers he's got valuable information for me. I want to find out what's so valuable, so we stroll out to the suburbs and set down on a log. I take my jack-knife and cut pictures on the log while Long Judy unfurls the information.

He has a scheme how I can double my three thousand. Which is to frame up on "Roudy" Perkins in a poker game. Long Judy knows I have a weakness for poker.

I quit the art of carvin' long enough to inform this gambler that my reason still sits on her throne. I point out that him and Perkins is partners and no lone player has a ghost of a chance against them two.

Long Judy admits that when they work in harmony there ain't no ordinary combination that can rob them of the bacon. But he explains that the charm of harmony is gone. They no longer holds each other's confidence.

Perkins stung him in a game lately, which busted their partnership. Each is free to plan his own games.

I let my carvin'-knife cool off again while I put Long Judy wise to the fact that his palaver don't deliver the goods. He holds on though, and brings up his big guns. He piles argument on top of argument and keeps on with it.

But he don't find the range. I figure Long Judy is more dangerous than Roudy Perkins.

Long Judy delivers one piece of information that I consider valuable. He says:

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" 'Most any feller can beat Perkins if he has the nerve to stay with him and bluff big. Perkins will hold a pair of deuces and bluff till the other feller lays down a pair of aces."

The meetin' breaks up when we hear old man Windus, proprietor of the Windus eating-house, ringin' his last call for supper.

WHEN I get home Maggie is out feedin' her chickens. She don't see me so I slip in the house and take the three thousand dollars from the jar and put it in the inside pocket of my coat.

I just have time to get away from the cupboard when Maggie comes flittin' in, singin' like a bird. She jumps and gives a little scream as she nearly bumps into me.

"Why, Pete," she says, "you nearly scared me to death! When did you come?"

I explain I hain't been there no great while—just come home for feed; wanted to be on time.

"You're gettin' to be a good boy," she laughs. "Good fortune makes good men."

After we've had supper and I've wiped the dishes for Maggie, I tell her there's a feller down-town that might help us invest our money; that I'm to meet him at the Red Devil at 7:30 and talk things over. Maggie asks some dangerous questions but I dodge 'em, so naturally she don't raise any objections. She makes me promise to be home at ten o'clock.

Pat Harrigan is alone when I get to the Red Devil. The fellers ain't come from supper yet. Pat and me has a social glass, and then I go over to the table by the west window of the barroom. I find the *Pineknot Buzzer* there and begin on the local news.

Pat goes round and lights the lamps when it gets too dark to see to read. Then Roudy Perkins comes in. He stops at the bar and calls for beer.

I watch him out of the tail of my eye. He only takes one glass, but hangs round and talks with Pat.

Now, this here Perkins is a shark. I'd played poker with him plenty. Never got in to lose very much—just some odds and ends in cash that I figured Maggie and me didn't need for housekeepin'. Maggie kept tellin' me if I didn't cut the gamblin' it would ruin us.

I always had a notion I could beat Roudy Perkins, or Long Judy either, if I only had money enough. Poker is a game that takes capital. It ain't no poor man's game. So this night I'm layin' for Mr. Roudy Perkins.

Perkins edges round to where I'm located and plays the social act. He don't let out any signs that he's heard how I done business with a certain gent.

When I see how he's workin' sly to get me into a game, I feel pretty good. It's just what I want. I hang back for a while and then let him pull me into a game.

At first we play a few mild social hands—break about even. It ain't long till we get to goin' faster. I lose a pot of fifty dollars without callin' his hand. We get another worked up to a hundred and I get it without Perkins callin' me.

I want to get to the big turn before Long Judy comes in, so I josh Perkins—tell him he ain't game. The next pot is run up to two hundred by raisin' back and forth five and ten at a time.

Perkins calls me. I lay down a pair of eights against his tens. It stings pretty hard, but I don't let on.

In the next deal I get three aces and in the draw get another one. I'm so excited my hands shake and my lips tremble. Perkins notices it and smiles. He seems to lay it to the sting I got at the last showdown.

It ain't often a feller gets four aces. I make up my mind to play for the big stunt if Perkins is game.

We step it up to two hundred again. Then I throw in five hundred. I don't say anything for I'm afraid of my voice. We each has our roll on the table.

I expect Perkins to call me. He don't. He just slips a thousand-dollar bill from the bottom of his pile and tosses it in the pot with no more concern than if it was a dollar bill.

I don't know what to do. I've got a lot of money in the game and if I don't call his hand it's gone. If I call him I might lose in spite of my four aces, for we're playin' the joker wild. Perkins might be holdin' a royal flush.

Three lumberjacks come in while I'm makin' up my mind what to do. They pass up the bar and come over and watch us. Perkins gives a little laugh and says:

"I hear you got your money easy. Don't be afraid to let it go easy."

His voice don't sound just natural to me. Maybe he's like me—got a good hand and is

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excited about it. I start to tell him he can have the pot when it comes to me, like a flash through my brain, that Perkins is bluffin'. I remember what Long Judy said—

"'Most any feller can beat Perkins if he has the nerve to stay with him and bluff big."

I raise his bet—make it eleven hundred.

Seven more lumberjacks come in and call for drinks. They're pretty noisy and Perkins and me glance in their direction. Then Perkins smiles and begins to count his pile—mostly small bills now.

"Twelve hundred," he says.

Then he counts it again, slow, and I follow him. "Twelve hundred," he repeats.

He puts it in the pot.

Perkins leans over and looks straight at me.

"Now then, call me," he says. "Or maybe you'd like to save a few hundred by quittin' now. Here's where you pay your money and take your choice."

What he says riles me. I make up my mind I'm goin' to win or bust. I count out seven hundred and ten dollars, which is what it takes to call Perkins' hand. I throw it in the pot.

When I see what I've done I can hardly hold in any longer. I feel like I want to grab the money and run. I know it won't work, but I have the feelin' just the same.

I'm thinkin' of Maggie. If I lose all that money, it seems to me I'd rather die than tell her I lost it in a poker game.

I've got to face it, lose or win, so I lay my four aces on the table. Perkins sets there, holdin' his hand and starin' at the four aces.

"Show your hand!" I call.

He don't move. I pretty near go wild. It looks like I've won.

"Show your hand!" I yell again.

I lean over the table and try to reach his hand.

"Show your hand! Show your hand! Show up!" The three lumberjacks yell. Perkins lays down his hand. He has three kings.

THE three lumberjacks let out a yell that comes mighty close to raisin' the roof of Pat Harrigan's saloon. The men at the bar come over to get wise to what's happened. Pat Harrigan follows them.

"I'll be ——!" says Pat.

"He got it on the square, Pat," says Perkins, tryin' to smile but makin' a poor job of it.

When the hubbub is over we go to the bar, all of us, and I set 'em up to the house.

Long Judy comes in, and when he gets the lay of things I can see he's pretty sore. He gets me in a corner and hints he ought to have something for the tip he give me about Perkins. It won't work. I'm not that easy.

Long Judy softens up and invites me to play a little social game with him. I hold the idea that Long Judy would be easy for me if I cared to go after him. I'd done a good night's work. There was no use in breakin' all the gamblers in town in one night.

But I set down to play a little with him anyway. We go in light, winnin' small pots back and forth till twelve o'clock. I keep count in my head how the game goes. I'm out about eighty cents when Pat Harrigan announces "lights out" at twelve o'clock.

All the other fellers has gone. Long Judy throws the cards on the table with a invitation to play again the next night.

We three go out—Long Judy and me waitin' at the door till Pat blows out the last light. While we're at the door I remember I'd promised Maggie to be home by ten o'clock. I get a little restless, knowin' she'll be uneasy about me.

We separate—Pat and Long Judy goes together and I take the short-cut for home. It's pretty dark. I ain't gone far when I get a feelin' that it's not safe to take the short-cut with all that money in my clothes. Everybody in town knows I always take that track home.

I turn at the next corner and go a roundabout way. I'm not far on the new track when I see a light about a hundred yards ahead. It's not a big light, just a small one that comes and goes like the end of a cigaret when it's bein' smoked in the dark.

I stop and watch it a while. It don't look reasonable that a feller out for a hold-up would stand at his post smokin' a cigaret. So I says to myself, "Forward, march."

I take maybe a dozen steps when my foot goes through a hole in the sidewalk, and I nearly fall down. An idea comes to me. Why not play safe? Why not put the money under the sidewalk and come back after it in the morning?

It looks like a bright idea. I take the

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money from my pocket and put it under the board walk through the hole. I use plenty of time, reach back under the walk and do the job right.

Then I start whistlin' and move on. The cigaret is still burning. When I get to it the man at the other end speaks.

He's one of the three lumberjacks that saw me win the roll. He says he's waitin' for his partners to come along and go with him to the lumber-camp.

"What was you doin' with a light back there?" he asks.

"Didn't have no light," I says.

"Well, I saw one anyway," he says.

I look in the direction from which I come, but I don't see a light. It looks to me that he's had too much liquor and is seein' double. I kid him about it.

"I sure saw a light back there," he declares. "Saw it for about a minute."

I kid him some more and then go on my way.

When I get home Maggie is up waitin' for me. I see something in her eyes that I can't make out. I get information pretty quick.

"Pete," she asks, "what did you do with our money? It's not in the jar."

Her face is flushed and she seems excited.

"The money's safe," I answer, and give her a greeting like old times. I knowed she wouldn't stand for me gamblin' with all that money, so I kept mum about the game. I had it fixed up to hide the money I won and not tell her about it till——

Well, maybe never.

I explain that the feller that was to invest the three thousand for us couldn't come through with the security, so I called the deal off. I tell her I didn't want to bring the money home after dark—didn't want to take the risk—so I left it with Pat Harrigan for safekeepin' till morning.

"Pete, it don't look right for you to take the money from the jar without tellin' me about it," says Maggie.

"Don't worry; the money's safe enough now," I tell her.

Maggie is restless—don't sleep much that night, same as me.

I get up at daylight. Maggie wants to know where I'm goin' so early.

"To bring the money home so you'll quit worryin'," I says.

I make out that Pat Harrigan said he'd be at the saloon early so I can get it.

When I get to the hole in the sidewalk I see a man comin' toward me. I don't want him to see me take the money out from under the walk, so I keep on goin' till I've passed him. Then I turn and walk slow in the direction he's goin'. When he gets to the hole in the walk he stops and looks in, and then stoops and reaches in the hole and seems to pick up something.

I hurry up. He turns and is holdin' a pin between thumb and finger—just a common pin.

"It's good luck to pick up a pin if its point is toward you," says he.

I know by his clothes that he's a drummer, and is out killin' time till the next train comes. He strolls on and I look for the money. It's not there.

I put my head in the hole and look good. The ground under the walk is smooth and I can see a long ways. It's plain the money's gone.

The hardest thing I ever done in my life was to tell Maggie how I lost the three thousand dollars. I tell her all about the game. She don't scold. She don't cry.

All she says is—

"Pete, if it teaches you that gamblin' don't pay, it'll be worth a good deal to both of us."

I learned the lesson. I ain't gambled from that day to this.

PETE tapped his pipe on the toe of his boot. He got up and stretched and put the pipe in his hip pocket.

"Well, it's time for dinner," he said. "I told Maggie I'd ask you to dinner this Sunday. Let's go."

As we walked toward his home Pete said:

"It's a mystery what become of that roll of bills I put under the sidewalk. Roudy Perkins has been friendly to me ever since the night of the big game. He ain't ever asked me to play poker with him, but he's friendly just the same. Long Judy seems a little sore yet because I didn't divide with him."

Pete turned and looked back as if to see whether anybody was following us. He came close to me.

"I'll tell you what I think about it," he said. "I think Roudy Perkins got that money. It was easy for him to plan to follow me that night and hold me up. When he sees me stop at the hole in the sidewalk he gets wise to what I'm up to. The rest

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is so easy he laughs himself to sleep when he gets in bed.

"Of course," Pete continues, "I don't know sure that Perkins got the money. The drummer might of got it. Them fellers is pretty slick. It may be too, that a wood-rat carried it away.

"Anyway it's gone and I'll never see it again. I reckon I'm ahead as it is, for I learned to quit gamblin'."

Pete's wife had a spanking good dinner ready for us. She and Pete were as cheerful and happy as newlyweds. When we had finished the meal we lingered at the table for some time and talked. Pete seemed to think it was a good time to let his wife know that he had decided to quit the mine.

"Maggie," he began, "if the good Lord and you is willin' I'm goin' to can my job of shovelin' muck and make a bid for a ranch. We've got twelve hundred dollars saved up. With that much we can make a good start on a ranch."

"Glad to hear it, Pete."

Maggie's eyes danced.

"You've done fine the last three years. You've not gambled once since you played with Roudy Perkins that night."

Maggie left the table and went into another room. She soon returned with a paper. She handed the paper to Pete. He looked at it in a puzzled way.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Can't you see what it is?"

She smiled, her face a deep red.

"I don't savvy it," said Pete, much confused.

"Why, it's a bank certificate for three thousand dollars. Read it."

She laughed joyously.

"Three thousand dollars sounds like old friends to me, but I don't tumble to how you got it. I see it's made out to you."

Pete was looking close at the paper.

"I'll tell you how I got it," said Maggie, taking a seat again at the table. "The night you played that game of poker with Roudy Perkins you stayed so late that I got uneasy. It struck me that you might be playing poker.

"I looked in the jar. The money was gone.

"I didn't lose any time deciding what to do next. It was near midnight then. I took the flash-light and hurried down-town to find you.

"I was almost to Main Street when I saw you coming. I wasn't certain it was you, but I thought it must be you. All of a sudden you turned and went back.

"I followed. I didn't want to call till I was sure it was you. By the time you got to the hole in the sidewalk I'd made up my mind to call to you, and was about to do so when you stopped. You seemed to be working with something on the walk.

"I waited till you went on, and then went to the spot where you had stopped. I saw the hole and thought you must have been putting something under the walk. I turned on the flash-light and found the money. I hurried home by the short-cut.

"The next day while you were away I counted out three thousand dollars and hid it away. The rest of the money I took to the Red Devil and asked Pat Harrigan if you had been there the night before and played poker."

"'Yes, and he busted Roudy Perkins,' said Pat.

"I hunted up Perkins and gave the money to him. He didn't want to take it at first—said you won it fair and square. I talked and pleaded with him, and at last he seemed to understand and took the money.

"I made him promise never to play poker with you again. I guess he kept his promise all right."

Pete was looking at his wife with a tender expression in his eyes.

"Maggie," he said, "you're a peach of a wife."

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Passenger by Freight

by Carl Clausen

Author of "Many a Slip"

MARION TRAVIS was used to having her own way. So was her father. When two temperaments of that caliber clash, something is bound to break. It did. But it wasn't Marion.

Henry Travis listened in silence to his daughter's recital in the library of the big house on Nob Hill. When she got through he had *his* say.

And he didn't mince matters. He never did. He held his position as president of the Pacific Navigation Company because of his lucidity in expressing his opinions and acting upon them. For this reason he was possibly the least liked and most feared man in the maritime affairs of San Francisco.

Just the same, Henry Travis had his friends. The dividends the stock of the Pacific Navigation Company kicked in with every quarter were gratifying even to his enemies. And you can't go on hating a man who keeps your pockets filled.

Another thing, Henry Travis never broke his word. He had fractured several things in his life—half a dozen rival concerns among others—but his word was not among them.

Henry Travis said his say to his daughter Marion. In its way it was something of a classic.

When he got through Marion knew more about love and the things appertaining thereto than she could have learned in a lifetime from R. Waldo Emerson, a thesaurus and a book of synonyms. Also for the first time in her life she got the only correct definition of the word fool—as applied to herself and Ben Lingle.

"I suppose you intend to live on the salary Captain Lingle is getting," Mr. Travis sneered when the squall had subsided somewhat.

"I suppose nothing of the kind," she retorted. "What's the use of having a millionaire for a father if you can't pick out a husband with brains instead of money? Goodness knows we've got enough of that in the family already."

"Eh! What?"

Henry Travis glanced at his daughter, startled. This was a new angle to an old triangle.

"Who told you Captain Lingle had brains?" he demanded.

"You did yourself. Besides, winning me puts him under suspicion," she retorted sweetly.

"I'll be ——!" Mr. Travis said in awed tones. "Modesty always was your weak point, Marion."

"Please don't swear," was her only comment.

Mr. Travis sighed.

"Brains are all right, Marion, but a little cash goes a long way," he hazarded.

"Yes," she admitted; "but unfortunately the two things never go together."

"What's that!"

Mr. Travis buried himself behind the paper with a snort. When Marion's remark had sunk in, he asked meekly:

"When did the—er—nuptials take place?"

"The day before Ben left for Seattle with the *Prosperine*."

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"In San Diego?"

"Yes. I had Sanders drive me down from Capistrano in the car early in the morning."

"And you spent the two days honeymooning around San Diego, I suppose."

"Coronado," Marion corrected.

"The infernal scoundrel!" Mr. Travis howled.

"I beg your pardon. Were you speaking of my husband?" she asked frigidly.

"I was speaking of your — Oh, go to the devil!" Mr. Travis spluttered.

"I *am* going—as soon as he comes back from Seattle," she replied.

"Indeed! Well, let me tell you one thing, young lady—" Mr. Travis here tapped the arms of his chair to emphasize his remarks— "you won't get a red cent out of me as long as you're Mrs. Lingle. That's flat. The crook! Thinks he can throw the hooks into me by marrying my daughter. Well, he's off his tack."

Marion drew herself up haughtily.

"My husband is a man, not a sponger. We will live if necessary on his salary as captain of the *Prosperine*," she said quietly.

"You will like ——," Mr. Travis roared. "I'm going to telegraph Seattle this minute and fire him by wire."

Marion's black eyes snapped.

"You discharge my—husband and I'll leave this roof at once."

"Huh," he sneered. "It's very considerate of you to leave the roof, at any rate. That's probably all I'll have left before I get through with that brain-storm of yours.

"Well, s'long! Drop me a line from your new address, and don't forget to snap the night-latch when you go out."

"Is that final?" the girl asked quietly.

"It's the beginning of the end, yes, as far as I'm concerned."

"Very well," Marion answered.

With a toss of her head she left the room, slamming the door behind her.

WHEN she had gone, Mr. Travis picked up the newspaper from the floor where he had dropped it in the heat of the argument, and glanced uneasily at the just slammed door. He wondered whether Marion would have the courage to make good her threat.

He glanced at the picture over the mantel. It was the picture of a woman with the same kind of dark eyes and unruly hair as his daughter's except that the hair was gray instead of black like Marion's. The face in the picture had a sort of haughty tenderness that made you breathless with desire to pierce the armor of reserve for what lay beneath.

Mr. Travis squinted uneasily at the picture as he chewed his dead cigar.

"Watch me put Cap. Ben Lingle through his paces," he soliloquized. "Oh, what a chance!"

Then he threw his dead cigar in the grate, reached for a pencil and paper and composed the following telegram:

CAPTAIN BEN LINGLE
BARK PROSPERINE
SEATTLE WASHINGTON.
YOU ARE FIRED. A WEDDING PRESENT IS DUE FOR YOUR PERSPICACITY. HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT TO CALL IT OFF? WIRE ANSWER COLLECT.
HENRY TRAVIS.

Two hours later the reply came:

MR. HENRY TRAVIS
NOB HILL
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.
HOW MUCH HAVE YOU GOT? CHARGE ANSWER TO PACIFIC NAVIGATION COMPANY. BEN LINGLE.

Mr. Travis howled with rage, grabbed his pencil and pad and wrote:

ABOUT THREE MILLION, YOU INFERNAL SCOUNDREL.

The answer was illuminating:

NOT ENOUGH.
BEN LINGLE.

Then Mr. Travis wrote a two-hundred-word telegram wherein he told Captain Lingle as near as he could without violating the telegraphic rules against blasphemy what he thought of him. He also apprised the captain that a new skipper for the *Prosperine* was on his way to Seattle to take charge, and that Captain Lingle could consider himself separately and collectively discharged, fired and canned.

As a postscript he added that any time Captain Lingle would show him fifty thousand dollars Mr. Travis would be glad to open the doors of the house on Nob Hill to him.

Then Mr. Travis went down to the office and quarreled with everybody from office

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boy to general manager, and felt better.

The answer to the last wire came while he was putting on his hat and coat.

WIRE RECEIVED. CONTENTS NOTED. WILL CALL AT S. F. OFFICE FOR BACK PAY. IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE AMOUNT STATED IN WIRE GO DOWN TO THE VAULTS OF THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK AND HAVE A TREAT.
BEN LINGLE,
EX-MASTER BARK PROSPERINE.

EX-CAPTAIN BEN LINGLE of the bark *Prosperine* was a personable-looking-man, twenty-eight years old, something under six feet tall, and blond. His gray eyes possessed a disarming directness of gaze and a glint of good-nature. He had a firm jaw and a mouth not ungenerously modeled.

He had spent ten years as able seaman, mate and skipper north of fifty-three—whaling mostly. This and the firm jaw had sold his services to Mr. Travis when the *Prosperine* was laid up in San Francisco for repairs, awaiting a crew and master.

The first time Captain Lingle saw Marion Travis he decided that she was going to be the future Mrs. Captain Lingle. She came down the gang-plank of the *Prosperine* leaning upon her father's arm, while the bark was docked at the Pacific Navigation Company's Pier Number Two.

A second look affirmed Captain Lingle's decision. So he set about it in a business-like way. What he didn't know about women was much too much, and he found out more.

But he had one quality that was lacking in all the others. He was totally deaf on his negative ear. He saw much of Marion, for a woman likes to be seen much of by a person who desires her, even when she can't make up her mind whether she wants him or not, and the *Prosperine* stayed in port for two weeks.

During that two weeks Captain Lingle proposed to Marion all over the shop from the fo'c's'le-head to the companionway hatch, and every day Marion kept coming back for another.

When the *Prosperine* sailed for San Diego with a load of mixed merchandise, Marion went motoring south with Sanders with feelings much more mixed than the cargo of the *Prosperine*. She let Sanders into the secret on the way down and Sanders, being a good chauffeur, himself very recently and very happily married, put his heart into the enterprise and stepped on the gas.

He brought the Cobra Six to a standstill at the foot of the pier at San Diego just fifteen minutes after the *Prosperine* had begun discharging her cargo. So all they had to do was to ditch Sanders and drive around to the little church around the corner. Which they did.

Two days later Captain Lingle sailed north for Seattle with the *Prosperine* and Sanders drove in the same general direction with his Cobra Six and Mrs. Captain Lingle.

Those two days had been the two only perfect days in the life of Captain Ben Lingle. He groped his way northward through a pleasant, pink haze and came near hanging the old *Prosperine* up to dry on Cape Mendocino. However, he eventually arrived at Seattle just in time to receive telegram number one.

For the next few hours Captain Lingle busied himself putting his affairs in order. There were a good many details connected with the giving up of his command of the *Prosperine*. He attended to them with a dull ache in his heart. He had grown to love the old ship from its blunt curved cutwater to its flat, box-like stern. He knew her every mood. He had learned how to coax eight knots out of her, close-hauled, and knew to a square inch how much canvas she could carry in a nor'wester.

It was his first command of a thousand-ton wind-jammer, and he had made the most of it. His trip from San Francisco to San Diego came near being a record-breaker in the matter of speed. From the minute he squared the yards off the Golden Gate she had logged nine knots, with a pick-up of this gait as she drove south.

He went about putting the ship in order for the new master. The cargo of pine lumber was almost taken aboard. The men were stowing the last slings below decks and getting ready for the deck-cargo. The lumber being kiln-dried, the *Prosperine* was still high in the water, and scheduled to carry some two thousand railroad ties between her bulwarks.

Captain Lingle met the new master of the *Prosperine* on the gang-plank with a firm hand-clasp like the good soldier he was. Taking his medicine in large doses was one lesson he had learned from life.

The new skipper was a short, thick-set

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man with a fringe of sparse gray hair encircling his flat, bald head. His eyes were small, gimlet-like and set much too far apart. His manner was nervous if not furtive—probably due to the unpleasant realization that he was shaking hands with the man he was about to supersede.

Ben Lingle took a dislike, which he knew was unworthy, to Captain Shultz from the moment he held the new skipper's flabby, moist hand in his own. He had decided to take the train to San Francisco, but on second thought he decided to avail himself of the privilege of returning to San Francisco, his port of shipping, as a passenger on the *Prosperine*.

He had a feeling that the old bark might need his services; and besides he would save the fare. Being a married man now, without a berth, the saving of the thirty-odd dollars cabin from Seattle to San Francisco was an item worth considering.

He had received a wire from Marion that morning, telling him that she was at his mother's Bay Street flat in San Francisco since the house on Nob Hill had been closed to her as Mrs. Captain Lingle.

So when the *Prosperine* cleared from Seattle ex-Cap. Ben Lingle went with her as passenger.

TWENTY-FOUR hours out, the bark ran into a howling northwester. Ben Lingle was on the bridge with Captain Shultz when the storm struck.

Ben's impressions about the new skipper had been correct. The man went to pieces completely. If it hadn't been for Ferguson, the first mate, usurping command temporarily, the *Prosperine* would have unshipped her spars on the spot.

The squall struck the bark on the starboard quarter and flung her, sail-aback, into the teeth of the gale, with the heavy spread of square canvas driving her under water to the hatch-coamings.

Captain Shultz, squat, oilskin-coated, and unnerved, crouched in the shelter of the starboard life-boat, bellowing out commands and counter-commands through the roar of wind and water.

Luckily no one paid any attention to his commands. Ben sprang to the assistance of the sailor at the wheel. With all their might the two men grasped the spokes and put the wheel hard to port in an effort to pay the bark off before the wind and give Ferguson and the crew a chance to clew up the square canvas.

The old ship paid off slowly, whipping the canvas against her spars in great lunging strokes that threatened to dismast her. Ben glanced aloft with a smile of satisfaction. Ferguson knew his business.

The royal and t'ga'n'sails were going up hand over hand as the bark ran down the wind. Through the driving haze of rain and spume he saw the men swarming up the windward rigging to gather in the high canvas.

Captain Shultz came aft hand over hand by the weather poop-railing, then:

"What d'you mean by interfering with my command?" he sputtered, his face purple with rage. "When I want your help I'll let you know."

"If I had waited until you let me know," Ben answered quietly, "the spars would have been over the side by now. Get back on the bridge and stay there. And keep your mouth shut or I'll shut it for you, Captain Shultz."

"—— your heart and soul," yelled the skipper, "you —— no-account women-snatching pirate—you—you——"

He never finished the epithet. Ben let go the wheelspokes and grabbed him by the neck.

"You've got a loose and careless tongue, Captain Shultz," he said, shaking the skipper as a terrier shakes a rat. "Get off this poop and stay off."

He turned the man face about, propelled him not very gently down the companion-way hatch and slammed the cover.

"I'll get you for this, blast you!" Shultz roared, pounding the hatch-cover with his fist. "Let me out, I tell you. Let me out; d' you hear?"

A moment later Ferguson came up on the poop.

"Will you luff her a bit, cap'n and give us a chance to take in the big canvas?" he said.

He glanced about.

"Where's the 'Old Man'?"

"Below. I put him there. I'll tell you all about it later, Mr. Ferguson. Step lively now. Sing out when you're ready."

The mate disappeared forward. A moment later his voice came booming aft.

"Ready, sir!"

"All right!" Ben shouted. "Stand by!"

He put his knee on the spokes and turned

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the wheel to starboard inch by inch. It was a ticklish piece of work. The gale had increased greatly in fury. If the bark were taken aback now, nothing could save her rigging.

Ben watched the sails like a hawk. Slowly the bark stole up into the wind. The weather clews began to pound.

"Haul her up, boys," he bellowed. "Hand over hand. Lively now before she fills again."

HALF an hour later, with both mainsail and foresail taken in and made fast, Ferguson climbed up the poop-ladder.

"I'm getting ready to lower the upper topsails and reef 'em, cap'n," he said.

Ben nodded.

"Perhaps you had better step below, Mr. Ferguson, and take a look at the glass," he said. "It feels like a long blow."

"You said it, cap'n," the mate exclaimed as he scrambled on deck a moment later. "She has dropped like a brick and she's still going down."

"Thought so! How much offing do you reckon we've got, Mr. Ferguson?"

"About a hundred miles, at noon, cap'n."

"Never mind about reefing the uppers then, Mr. Ferguson. Make them fast. We'll let the lower topsails stay a while and see how she stands up."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The mate started forward. At the skylight he paused.

"The Old Man is in his cabin cussing a blue streak," he grinned. "He swears that he'll have you and me both jugged for mutiny on the high seas, cap'n."

Ben laughed.

"I'll take the responsibility for everything, Mr. Ferguson."

The mate's face turned red.

"——, cap'n, I didn't mean that," he said reproachfully. "I'll stick by you. I'm not losing any sleep over what Shultz may tell the Board when we get in."

"I knew I could depend on you and the boys," Ben said with a glow of pleasure. "That's why I took the chance."

"I'm not so sure about the crew, cap'n," Ferguson said with a worried look. "The two new A. B.'s we shipped in Seattle are putting notions into the heads of the rest of them. They're beginning to wonder if they are liable to get hauled up for mutiny when we get gack to Frisco for refusing to obey the orders of the skipper."

"The —— you say!"

Ben's face took on a worried aspect.

"By ——," he said, 'I'll lay the first man out cold that refuses to obey my orders. I'm going to bring the *Prosperine* to port if I have to break the head of every man jsck of them. You may tell them I said so, Mr. Ferguson."

"Aye, aye, cap'n."

Night came with the storm increasing in fury every moment. The old bark plunged under lower topsails, forestaysail and double-reefed mizzen into the teeth of the gale. Shortly before midnight the storm became a hurricane.

At eight bells, the change of the midnight watch, the fore lower topsail blew out with the roar of a blast. It was well that it did. Even with but the three remaining sails the *Prosperine* could not stand up against the savage onslaughts of the squalls that poured upon her, laden with the icy chill of the arctic seas. She was flung on her beam-ends, with her lower yards dipping into the seas and her bulwarks buried in water to the hatch-coamings.

Captain Shultz came on deck. He staggered into the pale circle of the binnacle light, his mottled face livid with fear. Ben caught him by the coat collar and forced the wheel-spokes into his trembling hands.

"Hold her steady as she goes," he shouted. "That's about all you're good for. I'm going forward to bear a hand with the main topsail."

Without a word of protest Shultz clung to the wheel-spokes like a drowning rat to a chip.

"Mind you hold her steady," was Ben's parting admonition.

'Midships Ben found Ferguson standing by the weather sheet with four men aloft, passing storm-lines around the bellied sail.

Ben reached out his hand in the darkness and touched the mate on the shoulder.

"It's me—Lingle—Mr. Ferguson," he shouted in staccato gasps against the hurricane. "Shultz—at the wheel. How's it —going?"

"Weather clew-lines—is bent on," the mate shouted back. "They're passing—storm-lines—in the bunt—now, cap'n."

"All right. I'm going aloft. I'll sing out—when we're —ready, Mr. Ferguson."

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BEN swung himself into the weather rigging. The moment he put his foot on the first ratline he was forced flat against the back-stays by the force of the wind. His oilskin coat became tangled in the ratlines at every step aloft.

Finally, out of breath, he stepped into the crow's-nest and swung himself over the truck on to the topsail yard. He found two men on the yard passing the storm-lines around the bellied sail to two others riding astraddle the main yard below. The men in their yellow oilskins were vague shadow shapes clinging like rats to the rigging in the darkness that hemmed the ship in on all sides.

Running storm-lines around a lower topsail with a ship plunging on her beam-ends through a night as black as pitch is a difficult task. The men had taken the end of the line aloft and had dropped it over the topsail yard from above to the men waiting astraddle on the main yard below.

At each plunge of the ship to windward the men below watched for a chance to catch the swinging line. In the intense darkness they had nothing but their sense of touch to guide them in catching the line.

An hour was consumed before the line was finally caught and passed around the sail to the men above. Ben made the ends fast around the topsail yard and slid down the rigging to the men waiting on deck.

"Haul her home, boys," he shouted. "All together now."

It was four bells—two A.M.—before the crew had taken the last turn with the gasket around the sail. The *Prosperine* hove to, under fore-staysail and double-reefed mizzen.

Ben had just called all hands aft for grog when Ferguson came up the poop-ladder.

"She's taking water," he gasped, colliding with Ben in the darkness. "Just sounded the well, cap'n. Two feet, and gaining an inch every fifteen minutes."

"Man the pumps," Ben shouted.

He turned to the mate.

"Clear the pumps and get them working as quick as you can, Mr. Ferguson. I'm going below to take a look at the glass."

In the cabin a moment later, Ben noted with satisfaction that the glass was rising. The storm had reached its maximum strength. By dawn the worst would be over.

He took a stiff drink from the brandy bottle and replaced the bottle in the mess-room locker. He was about to return on deck when a terrific sea smote the bark amidships.

He was flung against the partition among a litter of boxes, trunks and nautical instruments. The old ship shook and trembled with the terrific, crushing weight of the sea that came pouring aft. The lamp swung flat against the ceiling in the acute angle of the prostrate bark and went out.

Ben scrambled to his feet, found the companion ladder and staggered on deck. At the break of the poop he met Ferguson coming up.

"The lashings of the deck-cargo carried away, cap'n," the mate shouted. "The sea knocked the ties adrift. We can't get at the pumps. It's as much as a man's life is worth to put his foot on deck. The boys jumped for the weather rigging to keep from getting killed.

"Six feet of the starboard bulwark carried away. The ties are going through the gap like a millrace."

"Hard a-port the wheel," Ben yelled to Shultz, making a dash aft, followed by the mate.

He flung the skipper aside and grasped the spokes.

To break a log jam on a river is a hazardous job. But a runaway deck-cargo in a hurricane with the night black as pitch is infinitely more dangerous. There is nothing one can do except stand from under.

The crew of the *Prosperine* clung to the weather rigging while their ship went to pieces before their eyes. The liberated ties raked the old ship from stem to stern.

Two thousand inanimate objects had suddenly sprung into life, bent upon destroying the *Prosperine*. They tore at her, clawed at her, and leaped into the air upon the seas that poured over her weather bulwarks.

The forward life-boats were smashed like egg-shells. The deck-house was reduced to splinters.

A twisted mass of ties rammed their way through the teakwood wall of the cabin, smashing everything before them. In two minutes the mess-room and officers' quarters were choked to the ceiling with twisted timbers.

Ben and his mate clung to the wheel

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while their ship was being battered to pieces under their feet. Neither spoke. Their faces almost touched.

Ben looked at his next in command. In the feeble glow of the binnacle light the man's face never moved a muscle. He was staring at the compass fixedly.

"She's paying off, cap'n."

Ben nodded.

"We've got to get at the pumps. She'll fill up and sink before daylight if we don't.

"Sure—we've got to—get at the pumps."

The *Prosperine* swung off slowly.

"Get Shultz to help you slack out the mizzen sheet," Ben said. "The wind is on the quarter now. I'll hold her."

AT DAWN the *Prosperine* was staggering south, a broken, shattered thing. The wind had died down. In a cleared space between the ties half of the crew was working the pumps in relays, while the rest under the direction of Ferguson were clearing the deck, throwing the heavy ties overboard to lighten the ship.

Ben sounded the pumps for the tenth time. The water was still gaining. He threw the sounding-rod on a pile of timbers and joined the mate.

"Looks bad, Ferguson," he said. "Four feet and gaining."

"I'll have the donkey-engine cleared to connect with the pumps in fifteen minutes, cap'n," the mate answered. "Maybe we can keep even with the leak after we get steam up."

"She's settling fast but it's worth a try. I'm worried about the crew, Ferguson. They've been grumbling among themselves for an hour. I can't expect them to stick much longer with the ship settling under their feet.

"Better clear the starboard stern boat. They'll feel better perhaps with the boat in the davits."

When the men had the boat ready to launch Captain Shultz called one of them aft and turned the wheel over to him.

Ben was forward getting up steam under the donkey-engine when he looked up and saw Shultz haranguing the pump-crew from the bridge. The men were quitting the pumps and were scrambling aft over the piled-up ties.

Ben picked up the hatchet lying on the deck beside him and started aft.

"Get back to the pumps," he shouted.

Captain Shultz whirled about. His face was livid with rage. In his hand flashed a Colt automatic. He pointed the gun over the edge of the bridge at Ben.

"I'm in command once more, *Mister* Lingle," he sneered. "You keep your hands off or I'll plug you where you stand."

He turned to the crew.

"Launch the boat, boys; stand by to abandon ship."

Ben made a movement toward the skipper.

"Stay where you are, Mr. Lingle. You will be the last man to leave the ship."

"Boys," Ben implored, "don't listen to that cur. Stick by your ship like men."

"We will like ——," one of them retorted jeeringly. "What d'ye think we are? I've got a wife and children, I have."

He pointed to Shultz.

"Besides, who in blazes is the skipper of this bark if not him?"

"Bill is right," chipped in another.

"Who the —— is running this ship?"

"I am," Ben thundered. "Get back to the pumps."

"You go to ——," the sailor answered. "You're nothing but a passenger."

"Ferguson!" Ben shouted. "The first man to come up the poop, knock him down."

Captain Shultz laughed derisively.

"Mr. Ferguson is not is a position to knock anybody down, Mr. Lingle."

Ben's face turned pale.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Mean I've got him tied hand and foot to the mizzen pin-rail," the skipper retorted. "I wasn't taking any chances. The launching-crew did it—under my direction."

"You hound!"

"All right, boys," Shultz shouted, ignoring the epithet with a sneer of contempt. "Into the boat with you. Two of you stand by the falls!"

The men scrambled aboard the boat swinging in the starboard stern davits. A moment later the boat struck the water and shot clear. The two remaining men carried Ferguson to the railing and lowered him over the side into the boat. Then they followed down the swinging tackles.

"All right, Lingle," Shultz said, waving his automatic; "get into that boat and be quick about it."

"I'm staying," Ben retorted calmly.

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"Desert the ship if you want to, but I stick!"

Shultz leaned over the end of the bridge and pointed the gun in Ben's face.

"Get into that boat before I kill you," he said hoarsely.

"Shoot, you cabbage-farmer, if you've got the nerve—which you haven't," Ben retorted.

The gun in Shultz's hand wavered.

"All right! Stay, —— you, and drown," he said.

"I'll stay and I'll not drown," Ben answered quietly.

A moment later, the boat pushed off. The men were resting on their oars. Shultz stood in the stern brandishing his gun.

"I'll give you one more chance, Lingle," he shouted.

"You'll give me nothing," said Ben. "Beat it—you and your white-livered bunch of landlubbers."

Shultz sat down. The men began to pull on the oars. The boat drew away. Ben stood and watched them for a moment; then he turned and went forward.

HE HAD cut out a man's size job for himself. First he sounded the well. The water was gaining fast. He swore softly under his breath and turned his attention to getting up fire under the donkey-engine. With the engine working there was a chance that he might be able to keep the bark afloat.

For half an hour he labored like a Trojan, throwing ties overboard while he watched the steam-gage of the engine. By the time steam was up he had a runway cleared from the engine to the pumps. It was but a moment's work to connect up with a rope-belt. In another moment he had the pumps working with thrice the speed of man-power. He smiled with satisfaction as he watched the six-inch twin streams of water pouring out on deck.

After two soundings fifteen minutes apart he found the water still rising, but not nearly as fast as formerly. With the remaining deck-cargo thrown overboard he figured he would be able to hold his own.

He attacked the deck-cargo again. About a thousand heavy hardwood ties still remained. It was a herculean task for one man. In places the ties were wedged so firmly that he had to break them loose with a crowbar.

He worked swiftly. Swift work was necessary. By lightening the ship the displacement pressure would be lessened. The leak would ship water less rapidly.

While the old ship plunged and pitched, helmless in the trough of the half-spent seas, Ben labored. The sweat ran down his face in rivulets, nearly blinding him.

Every fifteen minutes he paused to sound the well. After each sounding he pitched in with renewed hope and vigor. He was winning. The water was standing still. Indeed, at the last sounding he thought it had dropped a fraction of an inch.

Back to his ties he went. He was singing at his work now. The sea for acres about the ship was a mill-pond of floating timbers.

At the next sounding he gave an exclamation of joy. The water had dropped nearly half an inch! He ate a hurried lunch of hard-tack and cold pork which he salvaged from the wrecked cook's galley. Then he went back to work.

Shortly before dusk he threw the last tie over the side. When he sounded the well he found that he had gained a full two inches on the leak. Not until then did he take his rest.

Utterly weary and spent, he curled himself up on deck in front of the open fire door of the donkey-engine. For a while he lay staring at the flames with a smile on his lips.

Then he took from his pocket a locket. He opened it and held it up to the light. It was a dainty little thing with Marion's picture in it—her wedding gift to him.

"Honey," he said softly, "I'll have that old man of yours eating out of my hand and coming back for more. Fifty thousand dollars! The old snob!"

MR. TRAVIS was in consultation with Captain Shultz and Mr. Sargent of the Board of Underwriters when there came a knock upon the door.

"I told you I was not to be disturbed!" stormed Mr. Travis as the door swung in.

He paused, mouth open, rose half-way in his chair, and sat down again.

"Captain Lingle!"

"At your service," said Ben, stepping inside and closing the door softly behind him. "Good afternoon, Mr. Sargent."

He grinned at Shultz pleasantly.

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"Hello, Shultz! Saved your hide, eh? Too bad."

The skipper of the *Prosperine* sprang to his feet and shook his finger in Ben's face.

"That's the crook that made the crew mutiny and lost you your ship, Mr. Travis," he shouted.

Travis glanced at Mr. Sargent significantly.

"What have you to say for yourself, Captain Lingle?" he asked sternly.

Ben laid his hat on Mr. Travis's desk and sat down. Mr. Sargent looked at the ceiling.

"Well?" Travis thundered.

"What do you want to hear?" Ben came back.

He leaned over the desk, reached out his hand and pushed Captain Shultz back in his chair.

"Sit down, Shultz. And take your finger out of my face."

His voice was cold as steel, and there was a dangerous glint in his gray eyes.

Mr Travis pounded his desk.

"This is an outrage, sir! In my private office——"

Ben looked his father-in-law straight in the eye.

"What's this rat been telling you?"

"Enough to put you in jail for ten years. That's where you're going, Lingle, or my name's not Henry Travis."

"What for?"

"For inciting mutiny, sir. For stealing the command of a ship on the high seas. For losing my ship and a fifty-thousand-dollar cargo."

"Who said I lost your ship and cargo?" Ben asked quietly. "The *Prosperine* is at this moment anchored half a mile down the bay. If you don't believe me, phone Pier Number Two. I brought her in an hour ago.

"Her belly's full of water, but she's all there except the deck-cargo and the upper works. I had to fire the hardwood ties overboard to keep her afloat, and the deck-cargo cleaned her out some amidships."

Mr. Travis glanced at Captain Shultz. The man had crumpled up in his chair. His face was the color of chalk.

"What's the meaning of all this, Shultz?" he demanded.

The skipper of the *Prosperine* stared at Ben. His lips moved spasmodically.

"It's a lie!" he screamed.

Ben shook his head.

"It's no lie, Shultz," he said. "The jig is up. You deserted your ship wilfully at sea. I stuck and brought her in—lone-handed. I guess that'll convince any jury of criminal neglect on your part."

He turned to Mr. Travis.

"When I saw how things were going I took command. Sure, I know you can have me disrated for that. But I did it to save the *Prosperine*. He'd have lost her, the farmer.

"I fired the hardwood ties overboard. Sort of figured she'd stay afloat on the kiln-dried pine if I could get ahead of the leak. I connected the pumps with the donkey-engine and kept it running night and day.

"Plugged along for six days under stay-sails and topsails—didn't get much sleep but I made port with the help of a tug. So here I am."

"You mean that you sailed a water-logged ship through the Golden Gate without pilot and assistance," Mr. Travis exclaimed incredulously.

"Sure," said Ben. "Accepting help from the outside would have meant a big salvage claim. I wanted to avoid that. That was the main idea."

"I'll be ——," said Mr. Travis.

Mr. Sargent arose.

"I guess my presence here is not needed any longer, Mr. Travis," he said with a smile at Ben. "Captain Lingle seems to have handled the situation pretty thoroughly. I'll send an appraiser aboard the *Prosperine* tomorrow morning to appraise the damage."

Ben grinned.

"Barring a couple of open seams and the damage to the upper works, Mr. Sargent, there isn't much damage. A week in dry-dock and she'll be as good as ever."

Mr. Travis jerked his thumb at Captain Shultz, sunk in his chair.

"For Heaven's sake, Sargent, take that thing out with you before I do it an injury."

"Come on, Shultz," said Mr. Sargent pleasantly; "the Board wants a little chat with you."

WHEN the door had closed upon Shultz and Mr. Sargent, Travis looked at Ben out of the corner of his eye.

"I suppose I'll have to give you my blessing now," he growled good-naturedly.

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Ben shook his head.

"When I go shopping for benedictions I'll let you know," he retorted. "With a hundred thousand dollars Marion and I can dispense with blessings for the present —or the future."

"I am afraid I don't follow you, Captain Lingle," Mr. Travis said blankly. "Have you profited by the death of some rich relative?"

"No; I've profited by the cussedness of a living one."

Mr. Travis squirmed in his chair.

"Who?"

"Can't guess, eh?"

"No. Please be more explicit. I'm no good at riddles."

"Nothing would please me better. The rich relative is you yourself, Mr. Travis."

"Ah! How, may I ask, have you profited by my—er—cussedness as you call it?" Mr. Travis asked in silky tones.

"You fired me and put a farmer in charge of a good ship. Cussedness number one. You drove your daughter out of your house. Cussedness number two. She's at my mother's flat on Bay Street now."

Mr. Travis winced.

"Please leave my daughter out of this discussion, Captain Lingle," he snapped.

"Your daughter, as you please to call her, has everything to do with this discussion, Mr. Travis. It was for her sake that I stuck to the ship. Don't make any mistake about that."

"Indeed! I'm afraid I don't follow you yet."

"You will in a minute. In your last telegram you said something about fifty thousand dollars.

"The *Prosperine*, cargo and all, is worth four times that amount. Two hundred thousand divided by two makes twice the amount you mentioned in the telegram. Doubled the money, I did. I guess that's calling your bluff."

"Do you mean ——"

"Exactly, Mr. Travis. My claim for salvage is one hundred thousand dollars—the amount specified by law. Half of the value of the salvaged craft and cargo returned to its port of entry."

Mr. Travis chewed the end of his cigar in silence for a moment. When he spoke again, his voice was purringly pleasant.

"A very, very clever scheme, Captain Lingle, except for one thing. Salvage can not be collected by an employee of the company owning the salvaged property. It is part of his duty and routine to do all in his power to save the property of his company."

"Don't kid yourself, Mr. Travis," Ben grinned pleasantly. "In my pocket is a telegram signed by you. It is dated ten days ago. At that date you discharged me.

"On January the fifteenth I ceased to be an employee of the Pacific Navigation Company. Today is the twenty-fifth. As a disinterested party, I'm entitled by law to salvage."

Ben paused to let this information sink in.

"Then to what capacity do you attribute your presence aboard the *Prosperine?*" Mr. Travis demanded.

"I took advantage of my privilege to travel back on the ship as a passenger to the port wherefrom I shipped. I wanted to save the fare from Seattle to San Francisco. A married man without a berth has to be careful about expenses, Mr. Travis."

The room was very still. Mr. Travis glanced out of the window. Ben arose and reached for his hat.

"My lawyer will call on you in the morning. Good-by, Mr. Travis."

Mr. Travis whirled around and pointed to the chair.

"Sit down," he growled. "You're the first man that's ever done it, —— you, but I know I'm licked."

Ben laughed softly.

"Dad-in-law," he said, "I'll take the hundred thousand in Pacific Navigation Company, Preferred. The stock is paying ten per cent. I guess Marion and I can worry along on ten thousand a year. And it'll keep the money in the family."

Mr. Travis looked out of the window in silence for a moment. Then he said—

"Marion said something about brains."

He paused and regarded Ben thoughtfully.

"Better call her up, Ben, and tell her to meet us some place for lunch."

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PERHAPS the following is one of the most "different" talks we've had from our writers' brigade. Rightly enough, most of them talk very little about their writing but get together with us in the adventure field, so the present letter seems particularly interesting and really leads us into a sort of new adventure. It's partly my fault that Mr. Noel talked along these lines, but I'm glad it is.

And, since I've been headed into talking shop, I'm tempted to gab a bit about what he says about story writing. "If a man has a natural crook for story writing there is little need of formal training." Yes, but what *is* a "natural crook," and how does a man know whether he has it, and what is meant by "formal training"? I haven't anything wise to say about it. Might as well admit that I don't know. I've been with our magazine since it started in 1910, worked before that on five others and on *Romance* since it started last Fall. Also three years on a country newspaper, besides the nearly eighteen on magazines. Used to write fiction for some I didn't work on.

I'VE learned an awful lot, too. Only, unfortunately, most of what I've learned has been in the way of finding out how much I don't know. That's valuable knowledge all right, but lots of times lately I've found myself wondering how other people know so much. (No, this is no sly dig at Mr. Noel. So far as I am competent to judge, I agree with him, with due allowance for various interpretations of terms used. I'm thinking of critics, writers and editors in general.) And I pick up books, critical or analytic, and wonder how any human being can know so much as that about anything. I've managed, after all these years, to end up with only two fundamental theories as to story writing. I won't bother you with them. The point is that so many other people in the game seem to have hundreds instead of only two.

What I don't know is too big a subject to try to put on paper, but as to this thing of a writer's not needing instruction I want to deliver the wise judgment that he does, and he doesn't. As Mr. Noel says, doing a thing is the best way to learn how to do it, but you have to make an exception of such things as handling high explosives or running a complicated and delicate piece of machinery. Each writer (and there are probably 109,000,000 of them out of our estimated population of 110,000,000) is more or less a case to himself. All of them, of course, need instruction. But what kind of instruction? A correspondence or college course? Books on the art of story writing? Or just studying for himself the work of those who write best? Or some of each? I can't get much further toward an answer than saying "It all depends." Not only on the man himself but on the ***kind*** of course or book or writer he turns to.

IN ONE thing surely Mr. Noel is on the right track. Too little instruction is better than too much, if a man has any real ability. And surely no imitation of other writers is infinitely better than a little or much. If you'd read manuscripts by the ten thousand as I have you'd be amazed at the vast number of writers who've been trying to imitate O. Henry, for example. No single one of them can *be* O. Henry, therefore no single one of them can write O. Henry stories. Some can't write any kind of story, but others could write very good ones if only they'd ***be themselves*** and write their own kind of story.

I HAVEN'T said much, have I? But I warned you in the beginning that I didn't know much. I wouldn't have dragged these matters up to our Camp-Fire if it weren't that I know some of you

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are interested. Because year after year many letters keep coming in to every editor asking him to tell some one how he or she can learn to write. They might almost as well ask me to tell them how to be happily married. Sometimes I can help them on specific points but the main case seems to me about as I've put it above.

Now let Mr. Noel follow Camp-Fire custom and introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

Pullman, Wash.

I much prefer to read the chatty writing of others in "Camp-Fire," The Meeting Place, to making a contribution to that feast, but there are some few people who seem to know who I am and what I am, so it may do no harm to let others into the secret.

BORN in Iowa, many, many long years ago. "Mercenary Ambitions" is my first published story. Well, I am young, for the older I get the younger I am. Such a paradox can not very well be helped when one is born that way.

Some more: I'm a farmer by qualifications and destiny. It doesn't worry me either. A plain farmer is what I am. I've garnered a good many pumpkins (to me they are punkins) in my time, and loads and loads of corn. And if all the pigs I've brought safely up to bacon-sized hog-hood could be fried together in a big skillet there would be some grease.

In my teens I missed some years of schooling, then at twenty-one or later attended a country school two Winters. Later by insane persistency and much hard work I plowed my way through college.

Once upon a time I homesteaded in South Dakota, lived in a sod house and roamed the prairies. Some life that was! I've taught school, dug ditches (not many) mixed concrete, and—of course farming is my blue ribbon stunt.

ADVENTURES? I'm afraid not. But wait till I consult the dictionary to see how broad the term is. Laying Webster's word aside, I might say that if milking a cow is an adventure some few thousands have fallen to my lot. Matrimony has never crossed my path, so if it is really an adventure, as some who have mixed with it claim, I'm barred there too.

I'm an outlaw when it comes to conventions. The groovers are too uncomfortable for me. Eating soup in a set way has no fascination for me and stiff collars are an abomination in the sight of both mine eyes. I doubt it I have a collar-bone. If I should ever essay to deal in a branch of haberdashery it wouldn't be a collary. My hair would be the bane of my life if I were interested in banes. Though I get a haircut semiperiodically I am continually being identified as a musician, or better still as a retired farmer. When I enter a barbershop to get a haircut the barber begins to prate about crops, the weather, and E-strings, which shows that barbers do not talk shop on all occasions.

MY DESIRE to write originated years ago, as I remember, while I was on the farm in Iowa. Somehow I got infected with writers' bacillus and it has been in my system ever since. There is a theory that when germs enter the system the vital forces begin at once to develop a serum to fight the germs.

The battle rages hot for some time and if the germs come off victorious the human element is laid to rest with certain ceremonies. On the other hand if the victory goes to the serum the germs demobilize according to the terms of the treaty, the human element smiles and the nurse smiles back at him.

Now the fiction germ holds itself indifferent to this theory—at least in my case. At times I had a superficial feeling that the battle was over, that the germs had lost, but down deep in the back of my head (about the region of the parieto-occipital) I knew the fight would be renewed at some time or other. These intuitions have always been verified by ensuing attempts at composition.

ABOUT the writing of "Mercenary Ambitions". I received the stimulus to write the story from reading W. C. Tuttle's account of "Monkeying with Ancestors," a good story which appeared in *Adventure*, June, 1918. After reading Tuttle's yarn, boy-like I had an impulse to write a monkey story. In the midst of fabrication Pete and his group entered a protest. They argued that they were sufficient unto themselves, that there was no sense in bringing in a monkey. So I decided, "out goes he." The whole story is fiction from ear to ear—such fiction as it is.

All told, I've hardly done enough story writing to serve an apprenticeship. Of course I've written several stories, or near stories, or possibly far stories. The most of them are stored away in a shoe-box and the archives of my trunk. Some day I may blow a trumpet and resurrect them.

I've read writings galore on the technique of the short story. And I've taken two courses in story writing in college, but with it all it seems to me that if one has a natural crook for story writing there is little need of formal training. Common sense will soon point out the rules of the game. We learn to do this, that and the other thing by doing them, and I've found out by experience that I can learn to write by writing. I don't claim to have completed the learning; the process is still going on.—JAMES E. NOEL.

THERE have been various requests and offers for the original paintings from which *Adventure* covers have been made but they had to be declined because we could hit upon no entirely satisfactory basis or method of sale. We now have a large number of these originals on hand and believe we've found the right way to dispose of them.

On May 1, 1920, all will be offered for sale to the highest bidder and any one may bid. Send in your bid to reach us before that date and state very carefully not only the subject of the painting you want but also the exact date of the issue on which it appeared. Most of these originals cost us

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one hundred and twenty-five dollars each. They should bring a price of about one-third that figure but each will go to the highest bid. No bid less than ten dollars will be considered. Some of them will probably go for no more than that; for some of them so low a bid will not stand any chance. It is altogether a question of how many others happen to want the same painting and of the recognized market value of the work of the various artists, some of whom have more than a national reputation. All paintings are in good condition, none of them being damaged to an extent to make it unfit for framing.

Size of canvas is usually 30 in. by 21 in; sometimes smaller. A few larger. Exact size can be given in advance if desired.

All are oil-paintings except where indicated.

Packing done by us. Expressed collect and at your risk.

Beginning January 1, 1921, semi-annual auctions of cover originals will probably be held on the first day of January and the first day of June every year. But this is the time to get a chance at all cover originals up to and including the April 18, 1920, issue, which appears March 18.

Covers for the following issues have the word "ADVENTURE" and other, smaller type painted on them: 1911—Feb., Mar., June, July, Aug., Sept.; 1912—Apl., July, Sept., Oct., Dec.; 1913—Mar., Aug., Dec.; 1914—Feb., Mar., Apl.; 1915—Mar.

Covers for Nov. and Jan. 1915, Mid-Apl., 1919, and First Mar., 1920, have the word "ADVENTURE" but no other lettering painted on them.

Covers for the following issues have no lettering at all on them: 1917—Apl., May, First Sept., First Oct., First Dec., Mid-Dec.; 1918—First Jan., First Mar., Mid-Mar., First Apl., First May, Mid-May, Mid-June, Mid-July, First Aug., Mid-Aug., First Sept., First Oct., First Nov., Mid-Nov., First Dec.; 1919—all but First Feb., First Apl., Mid-May, First June, Mid-Oct., Mid-Dec.; 1920—First Jan., First Feb., First Mar., Mid-Mar., First April, Mid-April.

No other covers than these mentioned here are for sale.

IT IS not his first story in our magazine, though the first was a very short one, but Captain Scott's letter was written on that occasion, back in April, 1917, and probably reached us too late to go into that issue, so here it is now:

New York.

I speak with humbleness and would state that many of the experiences sound much worse than they really were. Nature has a wonderful way of bucking you up so that alarming incidents lose much of their terror when faced.

I WAS born in 1882 at Woodstock, Ontario, and was educated at high school and at the Royal Military College which latter is the Canadian "West Point." During peace time I held a commission first in the 22nd Regiment, the Oxford Rifles and then in The Governor General's Foot Guards. From 1905 to 1912 I was abroad installing a new system of marine lighting for the various Governments in Italy, India, Burma, Ceylon and Australia. In 1914, on the outbreak of war, I accepted a commission in the 21st Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, and served with them until they had been in the trenches about half a year when I came home with injured ears *via* the Red Cross.

While doing marine work at Aden I had a near accident with 1500 lbs. of calcium carbide on a barge out in the harbor. Water broke through on to the carbide and started to generate the six or seven thousand cubic feet of acetylene. An explosion of great force was probable and my native workmen all dived into the water with the sharks. As I could not swim as well as the sharks I stayed up and managed to get things under control.

While duck shooting at Karachi my life was attempted by two native boatmen but I saved myself with my automatic pistol.

In a railway compartment between Madras and Calcutta two Bengali natives tried to murder me but, again, my automatic saved the day.

I HAVE had very bad luck at sea. For years something always seemed to happen on board ship. I have run aground off the coast of Australia and I have been there three days at sea without wireless with the hold on fire. I have been stuck on a sand-bar in the mouth of the Hoogli River with a falling tide and not enough boats to take off more than part of the third-class alone. The captain told me that ours was the first boat known to slip off without turning turtle. Even in New York the old *Etruria* of the Cunard Line (now scrapped) once started her engines the wrong way and crashed through two barges ahead of her instead of backing out into the stream. That was the worst voyage I ever made across the Atlantic. Several times I dined in the main saloon in my pyjamas, once with the floor awash with half a foot of water. Needless to say there were no ladies present.

OF COURSE the war remains the greatest adventure of all. For half a year I had a front seat in the greatest show the world has ever seen. And they paid me five dollars and twenty-five cents a day to sit there. Finally my ears gave out and I was sent home. It started with a big shell from a howitzer that nearly got me. The enemy were registering their big guns on our front line and it was before our guns had plenty of ammunition so

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we could not call for much retaliation. Consequently we had to grin and bear it more or less.

These big shells from howitzers come over very slowly with a whistling sound. They fall almost vertically and, for the last hundred feet, may be seen as a great black dart. When the ground is soft, as it usually is in Belgium, these shells penetrate from five to ten feet before sufficient resistance is encountered to operate the percussion fuse which explodes the shell. I had been getting the men into the "feathers" or shell-shelter trenches and was on some low ground behind the parapet when I heard the ominous whistling of one of these big high explosive shells. It seemed to be coming very near but it was useless to move as I might run into it just as easily as away from it. I saw it enter the ground very close and tried to throw myself flat but the explosion occurred before I could reach the ground and I was spun around in mid-air by the concussion. The edge of the crater was close to where I picked myself up. At first I thought I was more scared than anything else but my side and neck were stiffened and my left ear permanently injured according to the London specialists. Time, however, has done much and, while I still have much noise in my head, I hope to be in uniform once more if the war lasts.—R. T. M. Scott.

OF COURSE he rates a say. Maybe some of you who know Afghanistan may feel like telling him and Camp-Fire in general what you think about it. At this writing it looks as if that country might have quite a lot going on before long.

Elizabethport, New Jersey.

Was reading Camp-Fire this evening and think I have traveled about enough to rate a say in said place. Just got discharged from the Navy last week at San Diego, Cal. I have punched cows from Montana to Mexico and from Death Valley to Oklahoma. Spent a year digging gold in the Klondike. Am rated an excellent revolver shot. Can hit an orange at twenty paces from the hip, drawing and firing. What's the matter with a story about the Klondike or a good tale about Afghanistan? I spent two years there and would like to find out what other people think of it.—H. B. Hanford.

IN THE following, J. Allan Dunn shows us how closely his novel in this issue follows actual history:

Pittsfield, Mass.

Reading over the carbon of "The Long Trail," it seems wise that I should take advantage of "The Camp-Fire" to say a few words that may save discussion or clear up doubt. When a story runs as close to actual history as "The Long Trail," it should be a satisfaction to know that some care has been taken to make it authentic.

I HAVE been happy in authorities, using many biographies of Fremont and, largely, his own "Memoirs." When an autobiography is written as simply as Fremont's, when it gives so generously the full meed of honor and applause to those who assisted a leader, when it describes so fully yet so simply the actions of the field, its mistakes as well as its triumphs, so unostentatiously the thoughts that prefaced and led to such actions, revealing an ambition leavened by faith, a daring and a true manhood enriched with enthusiasm for the project in hand, one can but feel, long before the bulky volume has ended, that one has seen a true revelation of the man—physical and spiritual, a hero despite his modesty, a strong man despite his failings and, above all, a true patriot.

THERE are those who decry Fremont's part in the conquest of California, who belittle his daring by the suggestion of self-aggrandizement. Some things stand clear—that he believed here was a wondrous country belonging by geographical right to the United States—that he was in secret service for the government, at least including the President and Cabinet and those desiring the advance of territorial possession and the protection of American frontiersmen—that his swift strokes saved California to America. As a scientist and an explorer he is unchallenged.

His man-love for Kit Carson was fully returned. Carson (in what is claimed to be the only authentic and approved history of his life, written by Lieut. Col. De Witt C. Peters, U. S. A. at Taos) corroborates in every detail the "Memoirs" of Fremont, and Carson was strong in his defense when Fremont was court-martialed at the instance of General Kearny. That the cause for this unfortunate charge was a jealousy between the two arms of the service, the army and navy, with perhaps a misunderstanding as to the exact standings of General Kearny and Commodore Stockton, is as certain as it is lamentable. To us of the Camp-Fire, Carson's whole-hearted love for Fremont perhaps says all that is necessary.

LET it not be forgotten that Fremont made five expeditions, two at his own expense, that, through stress and danger of weather, of desert, of Indian strife, he accomplished his ends, not least of which was the blazing of the trail for the trans-continental railroad, long one of his ardent dreams.

There have been only one or two men greatly honored and trusted by the Indian tribes, none more so than Fremont, and this by the varied clans from the Atlantic to the Pacific, all of whom hailed him as "The Great White Chief" and with whom he rarely was forced to fight because of his understanding of them, his absolute fairness and his intrepidity.

THE "long trail" is well known to me. From its starting-point, near the present site of Pueblo, over into California, there is none of it that I have not personally traversed. Twenty-five years ago I rode horseback over all that part of it in Colorado and Utah. Later, much of it in California in various ways, all of it in some way.

The language used, the acts performed, wherever Fremont is in action in the story, are, very largely, the actual words of Fremont or his men and, in ninety per cent. of the instances, the actions are absolutely as they occurred. Also when Carson takes up the tale of their Klamath expedition.

AS TO the situation between Mexico, England and the United States at the time, the following history, not always included in our text-books—if ever in its entirety—may shed some light:

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War was threatening because of the coming over of Texas. Mexico sulked and scowled and simmered. Mexico owed England money. California was suggested as payment of the debt and also as a slap in the eye for the American Gringos. England had a fleet at Mazatlan and in the mouth of the Columbia River waiting for the time to claim this possession. America had a squadron at Mazatlan watching England's actions. The *Savannah*, a frigate of 54 guns, the *Portsmouth*, *Levant*, *Warren* and *Cyane*, sloops-of-war averaging 24 guns, 32 lbs longs, 68 lbs shell, 42 lbs carronades; the sloop *Erie* with long 18's, the big *Congress* of 60 32 lbs longs, represented us. Ultimately Yankee ingenuity outwitted the British, led them on a false chase to Honolulu, doubled and got first to Monterey where the pusillanimity of Commodore Sloat almost lost us California, until Fremont forced Sloat's hand, ran up the Stars and Stripes and, when the formidable British ships arrived, it was to see the American flag floating proudly and Fremont at the head of his picked troops grimly ready to discuss the matter.

"If," said the British commander later, "if the Stars and Stripes had not been afloat above Monterey I should have infallibly landed and hoisted the Union Jack with all preparations to maintain it." So Mexican intrigue and British desire for a fair land and invaluable harbors was frustrated.

Further, State archives declare that Consul Larkin at Monterey was fully advised that Fremont's mission, while admittedly one of exploration, covered also authority for swift action should war break out. The sending out of Lieutenant Gillespie by the Government, to travel through hostile Mexico, to command assistance from Sloat at Mazatlan, to force marches until he found Fremont in Oregon with the news of war, is proof enough that Fremont acted advisedly and in complete alliance with Washington diplomacy.

HERE is a pertinent piece of history. In the year 1845 a priest, Eugenio Macnamara, was domesticated with the British Legation in Mexico City. He then made application for a grant of land for the purpose of establishing a colony in California. A square league (containing 4428 acres) was to be given each family, and half that amount to each child of a colonist. This territory to be conveyed was around San Francisco Bay, embracing three thousand square leagues and including the whole valley of the San Joaquin. Macnamara agreed to bring a thousand families at the beginning.

I set down here—without comment, save an underlining where he refers to America, that he who runs may read, a portion of his memorial to the Mexican President:

> "I propose, with the aid and approbation of your excellency, to place in Upper California, a colony of Irish Catholics. I have a triple object in making this proposition. I wish, in the first place to advance the cause of Catholicism. In the second, to contribute to the happiness of my countrymen. Thirdly, I desire *to put an obstacle in the way of further usurpations on the part of an irreligious and anti-Catholic nation.*"

Macnamara was landed, from the British frigate *Juno*, of the main fleet under Sir George Seymour, at Santa Barbara, at the critical moment, ripe for the settlement of the grant of land and the passing, with it, of the whole country under British protection.

If he did nothing else, the preservation of the lives of American pioneers by Fremont's prompt actions, is enough to justify him.

FREMONT invariably had a bodyguard of Delaware Indians who slept about his person and tent. On his second expedition—this was his third—Fremont describes the arrangement by the Indian Agent, Major Cummins, to supply him with Delaware hunters. So satisfactory were these that on the next trip Fremont writes:

"From the Delaware Nation twelve men had been chosen to go with me—good hunters and brave men—among them two chiefs, Swanok and Sagundai."

Lieutenant Walpole, British Navy, in his book "Four Years in the Pacific on *H. M. S. Collingwood*," describes these Delawares at Monterey at the time of the arrival of the British Fleet. Carson speaks constantly of their exploits. They "were ever on the war-path, so far as the expedition was concerned, leaving no opportunity untouched of that sort."

IT MAY seem strange to read of any alliance between such savage tribes as the Cheyennes, Arapahoes and Sioux. Much is misunderstood of the existence of pacts and truces between these fierce warriors. Let me quote Fremont's official log of his first expedition.

"The Great Village had been broken up and the tribes were on their ways home. It consisted of Arapahoes, Cheyennes and Oglallah Sioux who had crossed the Platte eight or ten miles below the mouth of Sweet Water intending to regain the Platte *via* Deer Creek. They had been brought together by the bad year."

Again, on the third expedition:

"We met Oglallah Sioux on the way up Bijou Fork to beg horses from the Arapahoes, who were hunting."

As a matter of fact a bad season of drought, with scarcity of game, invariably meant a friendly junction of these tribes for purposes of subsistence. I do not believe the Sioux would ever make truce with the Kiowas, the Comanches, the Snakes or the Osages, but with the Arapahoes and Cheyennes they *did*—and there's an end on't. These three tribes practically shared a hunting territory under elastic conditions little understood to-day. All had far greater scope than is usually understood. The Arapahoes were not confined to any part of what is now Colorado, nor were the Cheyennes, while the Sioux had numerous and widely scattered sub-tribes.

A FREED-NEGRO actually accompanied one of Fremont's expeditions and was well liked by the commander. He later settled and prospered on the Pacific Coast.

AS FOR the gold, Fremont relates that Owens and a man named Breckenridge on occasions called his attention to glittering grains that he set hastily aside without examination as pyrites of iron, or fool's gold. Owens' discovery was in

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the American Fork. Fremont states that they were far more occupied with the discovery of a good spring, a fine camping-place, a pass in the mountains, the source and flow of a river, than they were with the possibilities of metal in the hills or streams. They were men of single purposes.

I think this is all. I don't want to be prolix. I do want to assure my friends of The Camp-Fire that I have earnestly tried to make my yarn convincing from the historian's, as well as the story-teller's, standpoint.—J. ALLAN DUNN.

A CASE in which our Camp-Fire buttons introduced comrades wandering in foreign lands. I'm even leaving in the post-script. Though I make a business of cutting out things referring to the magazine when I send your letters to the printer for Camp-Fire, this is a mild example of the reports we have at Camp-Fire now and then of strange places where the magazine has been found. I only wish, now, that I had passed on to you the many instances that were reported in letters from the front—of copies begged, stolen and fought for. I remember one of you who was rejoicing because at the end of a scrap over one copy he had emerged with eight pages of a story by W. C. Tuttle.

But on the whole it's better to cut out complimentary things about the magazine before letters go to Camp-Fire. Otherwise some people would think we were merely using "Camp-Fire" to boost the magazine. And anyhow there are a lot of things besides the magazine for us to talk about.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

While in Huelba, Spain, and also in Marseilles, France, I was fortunate to find two Camp-Fire men whom I knew to be such by the buttons in their coats. Of course we got together and made merry, and many a toast was made those nights to Camp-Fire and its members. I tell this to explain my hurry to get my button. I expect to sail for southern waters in a short time and might miss some comrades by being without a button.

With best wishes to Camp-Fire.—JOHN ADAMSON.

P.S. The most welcome thing we got on board was a copy of *Adventure*. A British officer gave it to me when we ran into Gibraltar for fresh water.

WORD from an old Camp-Fire comrade (not Uncle Frank) from whom we haven't heard for some time. He didn't ask me not to use his name, but I thought I'd play safe.

California.

. . . My right eye is gone, and I do not write much. I have taken up the study of Pacific Coast shells as a means of passing the time. . . . but I wish you would tell the writers to not hit a man with the *butt of a pistol*. It is not good form among gun-men. Punch 'em with the muzzle, smash 'em with the barrel, throw the gun at them when emptied. But, for the the love of Mike, never paste a man with the butt. Even in fiction. It's a loss of time, and it isn't done.

As an illustration of what I mean by butts: Once upon a time (1891) one "Moccasin Jake," a deputy marshal in Lusk, Wyo., tried to hit me with the butt of a Colt forty-five. He lost his gun and had to resign, and I got six months in jail for resisting an officer. If he had not changed ends with that "hog-leg" he might have made a winning. As it was we both lost a bet.

ADVENTURE still exists in real life. The other day I went to the village (Oceano) and assisted at Portugal's National Celebration. Had a scrap with an Irishman, got full of Dago Red, and the mule upset me in the lake. Three Greeks rescued me and I arrived at home a sadder, wiser and wetter man.

I am enclosing a photo of the mule aforesaid. She isn't a mule, but a Spanish jennet. Sired by a race horse, and suckled by a jackass of the feminine gender. Most of the time she is a real pal, but, like all the other hybrids, she sometimes tries to find out who the boss is.

You will perceive that I do not use spurs, Spanish bits, nor yet a club. This photo is as real a wild (?) Western scene as often occurs. Most people here have automobiles, but Jane and I are relics of the olden time. The wild West greets the effete East.————.

IT'S a good bet that this comrade and Edgar Young will find plenty to back up their opinion. I wonder, sometimes, which is harder and takes more real stuff—wanting to wander and wandering, wanting to wander but sticking in one place through a sense of duty, or wanting to stay in one place but wandering because you have to. I don't know. Am just wondering.

Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Have just finished reading "The No-Good Guy," by Edgar Young, also his answer to W. F. Connolly, Princeton, N. J., and would say that his remarks about the fellows from New Hampshire and Vermont that are found in Central and South America would fit the ones from Massachusetts that get out of their native State.

It struck me as being such a truthful picture of the natives of my own State that I just had to spiel about it. If there is anything that damns a person more than lack of material success in Massachusetts I'd like to know the name of the animal. Of course this is true to a great extent wherever one goes, but nowhere is it stronger than in the old Bay State.

The old adage, "A rolling stone gathers no moss," is true enough, but what would the United States consist of to-day if it wasn't for the rolling stones who pushed out and out and out?

Personally I don't believe that it takes much for a man to stick in one place for years and grind away for a great many times he couldn't go to work anywhere else. But for a man to "blow in" here, there and somewhere else, get a place and hold it down until the wanderlust becomes too strong and repeat time and again I claim only a good man can do it.—F. T. TRACY.

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LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

AS STATED here before, the Red menace in this country would be no menace at all if we Americans had been sufficiently grounded in democracy to understand what real democracy and real citizenship in a democracy really mean. Instead we have tried to breathe in democracy from the air, without effort or thought. You can't get democracy out of the air unless you are constantly putting democracy into the air. And we've not been doing that.

There has been just complaint against conditions in our country for many years. We've been ruled by a minority of politicians, a minority of capitalists, or a minority of laborers and have suffered in consequence. We blame the politicans, the capitalists, the laborers, even our form of government. But most Americans go no further than that in hunting for the real cause. Consequently, when Bolshevists come preaching their doctrine (and they preach it well) many Americans see in it an escape from present conditions. The workings of its system are carefully explained to them from the ground up. Our present system has never been carefully explained to them, whether they are foreign-born or natives. Therefore its case is not strongly presented to their minds, while the case of Bolshevism is very strongly presented. The Bolshevists make a business of presenting their case well; the advocates of our own democracy don't even attempt to advocate until some one explodes a bomb under them. What wonder that Bolshevism gains many followers?

WORSE still, when the advocates of our own democracy do finally attempt to show the people at large the value of our democracy they nearly always try to do so by feeding the people pap. They mouth sentiment and platitudes and expect the people to be fools enough to accept this stuff against the very well-presented case of Bolshevism. In the long run this kind of pap does more harm than good to the cause of our democracy.

They too often make another mistake. They abuse Bolshevism beyond all sense and reason and beyond the bounds of truth. They suppress, distort, lie. *And the cause of Bolshevism gains thereby.* However mistaken Bolshevism may be, it is an *idea*, and *you can not kill an idea with lies.* You only make it stronger. There is a perfectly sound case against Bolshevism, but these people are too ignorant or too crooked to present it. Instead, they lie; gradually the people learn that what they have said is lies, lose faith in their guidance, see that Bolshevism has been painted worse than it is, that the case against it seems flimsy and untrustworthy and listen more and more willingly to its teachings.

WHAT the people should be told is the truth. The truth is that our present system of government is, fundamentally, better and more democratic than Bolshevism; that its faults are due to us, the individual citizens, and that the remedy lies with us, the individual citizens; that we have created or permitted these faults solely because we have let control slip out of our hands into the hands of various minorities by not meeting our individual obligations and responsibilities as citizens of a democracy; that Bolshevism or any other system of government would be at least equally unsatisfactory if operated by such bad citizens as ourselves; that our present system of government can be made all it should be, by lawful, democratic methods already provided, if only we have enough energy to use them; that the use of force against existing democratic machinery is everlastingly undemocratic in itself and in its results.

STILL another mistake. After taking no steps to build up and foster in this country a real understanding of real democracy, when the Reds become a menace as a result of our own neglect we turn to the ax as a remedy. *You can't kill an idea with an ax.* You only make it stronger. Among other things, you create martyrs, and martyrs are a tremendous asset for any cause.

When our law is violated the ax should and must be used. But there would now be little need for the ax if we had been building up a spirit and a real understanding of democracy in this country. Nor will the ax alone be enough to save us. The only thing that can save us is the organized, systematic teaching and practising of real democracy and citizenship.

We do not limit the ax to the cases that deserve it. Waked from our slumbers, we now run amuck, smiting the innocent and the guilty alike. If a man admits seeing anything at all good in Bolshevism we leap upon him as a dangerous enemy. He has a

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perfect right to advocate Bolshevism, or any other theory of government, openly and whenever and wherever he pleases, so long as he does not advocate the overthrow of our government by force. But we are so ignorant of democracy that we forget that its fundamental essential is freedom to express free opinion freely. We can do more for democracy by guarding and holding sacred that principle than by suppressing all the Reds that ever happened.

PLEASE note that the Reds rejoice in the tactics we are using. Being wise, they *want* to be persecuted. It's the best advertising in the world. Do you remember the city that, instead of opposing the I. W. W. orators, provided them with protection and a public platform? As soon as this was done, the I. W. W. orators quit coming. They knew they could accomplish more by going where there was opposition. Likewise the Bolshevists today can preach their doctrine, minus the overthrow-by-force part, with comparative ease and lack of personal attack. If it's so good a system why aren't they content to preach its adoption by lawful, peaceful methods? Partly because they know it won't stand the test of calm, reasoned and full argument, but chiefly because they know they can advance it more by advocating overthrow by force, being publicly punished for doing so and thereby getting for their cause more advertising, martyrs and converts than can be got in any other way.

READ the following letter. If you are a fanatic and have any doubts of the writer's thorough Americanism, write to him as he suggests. I think you will get a little jolt from his reply.

New York.

I THINK the recent action of the New York Legislature in barring the five Socialist Assemblymen from their seats was one of the most powerful blows ever struck at Democracy. It is a crying shame that such things can be put over on American citizens. Lord knows I'm no radical (in the accepted sense of that word); I lean toward conservatism. I have done as much as any American to break up the "Social Revolutionary Forces," but I have contributed to the Defense Fund of the five debarred solons. If the people want those men to represent them, they ought to be allowed to take their seats. The fault is not with the five men, but with the voters. Yes, we can go beyond the voters and blame ourselves—we "native" (sic) Americans who make it so easy for the riff-raff of Europe to become electors before they understand the fundamental principles of our form of government.

"The Republican party loses my support from now on, until it drops such tactics and heeds the advice of its wiser members, such as Judge Hughes. And I am very sorry to see one of my fellow Legionnaires mixed up in the affair.

"I am writing all this to you because you are one of the few Americans I can air my views to without being designated a disciple of Trotzky. And I simply must get it off my chest.

"If you have any regard for your country and have her interests at heart, for Heaven's sake do something to combat the great madness now sweeping over her.—W. W. F.

"P. S.—Use this letter if you want to, signing it W. W. F. If any bird wants to question my Americanism, let him write to me care of *Adventure* and I'll furnish the details."

IF THE action of the New York Assembly were not so serious it would be ludicrous. If our wise legislators don't know anything about democracy, how can the rest of us be expected to?

If, as charged, the Socialist party demands that allegiance to it take precedence over allegiance to the country, then the Socialist party ought to be disbanded. If, as charged, it compelled the five legislators to give it their resignations in advance so that they could at all times be held subservient to party rule, and if such procedure is one of the rules, enforced or not enforced, of the Socialist party, then its leaders and all its legislators ought to be deprived of citizenship in the democracy they have violated and betrayed.

But what amuses me is that elected candidates of either the Republican or Democratic party should be the ones to bring the charge so piously and patriotically. They may not bind themselves to the party-before-country principle by any such definite and concrete bonds, but in a vast majority of cases the successful party candidate of either of the great parties is just as much the property of his party and just as much a betrayer of democracy thereby as these noble New York legislators accuse the Socialist members of being. Think of party politicians working themselves into virtuous indignation over other people's giving their first and foremost allegiance to party!

At this writing the case has not developed sufficiently to sift the truth from lies, but it looks to me very much as W. W. F. states it. In any case we can be quite, quite sure that the indignant legislators will be found ridiculously lacking in any real understanding of the essentials of democracy. For they are, at best, merely average Americans like the rest of us. Being politicians, they are probably worse.

MOST emphatically, I agree with W. W. F. that we native Americans are at bottom the ones who are to blame. I don't think, however, that our chief fault is letting foreigners become citizens before they understand the fundamental principles of our democracy. Our chief fault is letting *ourselves* understand the fundamental principles of our democracy so very little that our democracy has come to be in danger not only from the active aggression of the Reds but from our own passive habit of lifelong ignorance and indifference to our responsibilities and obligations as individual citizens. And, as a nation, we shall never really understand—or really have—democracy until the fundamentals of democracy are systematically taught in our schools and our homes and practised and upheld by us the individual citizens.—A. S. H.

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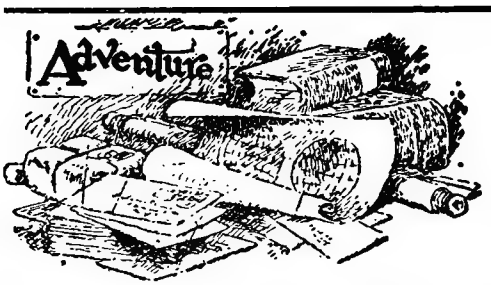

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

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Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: Volumes 1 to 20, inclusive, with the exception of the following: Vol. 1, No. 1; Vol. 2, No. 1; Vol. 3, No. 4; Vol. 15, No. 4; Vol. 16, No. 4; Vol. 18, Nos. 5 and 6, Vol. 20, Nos. 2, 5 and 6. 110 numbers in all. Will be sold to person making highest offer, express collect. C. O. D.—Address L. J. ROWLAND, 824 West 8th St., Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn in lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *unstamped* envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it, aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire, should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, 6 W. Concord Ave., Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, (lately Capt. A. E. F.) care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri Valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac B'ld'g., Chicago, Ill. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps. Hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, 1101 Kimball B'ld'g., Chicago, Ill. Covering Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

10. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

11. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

12. Mexico Part 2 Southern
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

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13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering south-eastern Ontario and the lower Ottawa Valley. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping.

15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

17. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

18. North American Snow Countries. Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

19. North American Snow Countries Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Richmond, Quebec. Covering New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper and wood-pulp industries, land grants, water-power.

20. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

21. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

22. South America. Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

23. South America. Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

24. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

25. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, Box 807 A, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N. M. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports; manufacturing.

26. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

27. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

28. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

29. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

30. ★ Africa Part 3 Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

31. ★ Africa Part 4 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo.
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

32. ★ New Zealand and the South Sea Islands
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

33. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg, Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

FOR ARMY, NAVY OR MARINE CORPS

What the Government is doing for discharged soldiers and sailors. Facts not opinions given. No questions answered involving criticism or bestowing praise or blame. Enclose stamped addressed envelope. Address—SERVICE, THE HOME SECTOR, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, New York.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

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The Republic of Honduras

THE following article on Honduras is given you by Dr. W. C. Robertson, a resident of that progressive Central American Republic. It contains invaluable, up-to-the-minute information for the prospective home-seeker:

FORGET most that you have ever heard or read concerning the republic, as almost in every instance the information is malinformation, mostly romance and lies, often malicious lies. There is a clique whose *metier* is to blackball Honduras, that men may be deflected towards other Central American republics, where they hold extensive interests.

Thus, all that you read or hear merits sifting to the bottom, and strong corroboration before acceptance.

I have no axe to grind, and shall state the truth without favor. Men who know the truth before the inception of a trip here will have no kick coming later, if not satisfied.

I would recommend no one, thinking of a home, to buy land within the coast belt, though there is a better market there. The proper place for intending settlers to look is the interior. There you can find land to produce anything that can be grown from Florida southward to the Canal.

Prices of land differ according to quality; the poor land only fit for grazing purposes can be got at fifty cents silver per hectare, and up to two dollars silver for the better grades of agricultural land.

You select what you desire from the public domain denounce it as grazing, or farming, or irrigable, before the local *Juez de ley Civil*, who passes your petition to the authorities. They appoint a surveyor who measures, at your expense. Then the *Juez* offers it at public sale to the highest bidder; upset price being the legal price of that class.

Nobody ever bids against another, so it is merely a form to comply with the law.

You pay the *Juez*, when he extends and records title, for which you pay, and the land is yours in fee simple for all time.

The fifty cent land, with all burdens included, will cost about one dollar and fifty cents and the two dollars, about four dollars. This at the present exchange is two dollars American currency.

Better lands can often be got cheaper, if one knows the ropes, as most of the good lands are in the hands of individuals, in the form of old Spanish grants, and can be bought as low as one dollar per hectare. A hectare is, roughly two and a half acres. Special lands, special prices.

The interior has no facilities at present for transmission of produce, and the farmer has to count on the local market alone, until transport comes, which we expect in the new future.

There are not enterprises where wages can be got to tide a man over, so he would require a sum sufficient to pass him to producing.

Five hundred dollars would be enough to start on in a small way, but the man who comes with that sum would have to forget his vices and economize.

The health of the interior is better than that of Florida, which it very much resembles in climate and temperature. The seasons are practically the same. I have resided for years in both places and have compared records.

The best money crops at present are coffee, tobacco, potatoes, vegetables, and, in the vicinity of the towns, flowers.

A man can produce his living on the ground, and only requires cash for salt, shoes and clothes. If he has a few cows he can sell butter and cheese at an average price of fifty cents per lb. Eggs in constant demand.

Living is very easy, for this is the land where you "tickle the ground with the hoe, and it laughs with a harvest."

By careful planting two to three crops can be raised annually.

In Olancho there is no other *estrangero;* I am alone, and I have never seen any trouble of any kind that I did not make myself.

There are more snakes in one county in Florida than in all Honduras, and wild animals who attack man are unknown. Of the snakes, the only one worthy of care is the lowland mocassin, and that can sometimes be seen in the river bottoms. The wild animals which in some places are detrimental to the cattle, are the jaguar, locally *El Tigre*, the puma—*el leon*, and the panther. They are rarely seen, even by those who seek them in the hunt. In twenty years I have seen three jaguars, and one puma, no panthers. Then they were running in the woods, and no chance for a shot. Tales about their ferocity are lies. I have prospected over the republic and have slept alone out in the open at all times without having had greater use for a gun than that of providing food.

Gold is omnipresent in this department, but in such small quantities as to pay only when worked by hydraulics on a large scale. Furthermore, all the placers and mineral zones worth having are in the hands of companies and individuals, and none of them are being worked at present. The mineral deposits in this district are in the hands of two New York concerns, and myself. Any one may work on my property, but the others will permit no trespassing.

There are no placers where a man can pan out a living. The Spaniards worked those all out while they held the country.

Business opportunities are everywhere, and I know of no place where a small capital may reap such profits.

A man ought to have a working knowledge of Spanish before he comes, as it is the language, and there are few who speak English.

No man ought to bring his wife until settled.

There are no laws inimical to the foreigner who has all the protection he could wish and will be respected as he deserves.

The natives are pacific and humble and treat the stranger well, as long as he does not meddle in their political matters.

Revolutions in no way concern us, and leave us severely alone.

The best route to the interior is by Puerto Cortez via rail to Potrerillos, by mule inland. Mules should be hired with the needed muleteers who are guides, also. Stock is cheaper in the interior.

The banks here are safe and transact business with the exterior.—DR. W. C. ROBERTSON.

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Russia of Today

SO MANY inquiries have come to Major Lochwitzky regarding present day travel in Siberia and Russia that he has prepared the following as a guide for those who may contemplate trips into European or Asiatic Russia:

AS THE Soviet Government of European Russia and the All-Russian Provisional Government of Siberia are so unstable and on the verge of collapse, it is simply impossible to advise those who desire to secure either military or civilian employment with the above mentioned governments to do so at the present time. In my opinion it is best to wait until Summer or Fall by which time a definite policy by the governments of Russia probably will be established and, at the same time, the Allies and the U. S. probably will have the assurance that the citizens of their respective countries will not be molested while living or traveling in Siberia or Russia.

Although an American dollar is equivalent to a number of Russian rubles (according to the locality) it does not mean that one hundred dollars in U. S. currency would make out of an American a Russian millionaire. So any speculation at this early part of the game whould be unwise and dangerous.

I have already written letters to different Russian officials in Siberia, but either did not get satisfactory answers or no answers at all. Regarding the securing permission to mine or to engage in lumber ventures (as some of the inquirers wanted me to ascertain), lack of railroad equipment, non-existence of any permanent schedules, make it impossible for even Russians, not mentioning Americans who do not speak the Russian language, to engage in any lawful enterprise. So, taken altogether, it seems best for foreigners to keep out of Russia until things become much more settled. Of course, if some one wants to go to Russia to join either the Provisional or Soviet Governments, with a view to being murdered one way or the other, or in some unusual way, I should think that this would be the best plan to accomplish it.

As soon as I can get correct information a to a certain region of Russia being free from Bolsheviki and starting an orderly way of living under a stable, local self-government, I will be able to answer my correspondents in regard to their prospective views in Siberia or Russia.—MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY.

San Blas Gold

NO WHITE men have ever made the overland trip from the Panama Canal Zone to Columbia since the days of the Spanish invasion. And the chances are they didn't then. It is one of the least known inhabited sections of the globe—the land of the San Blas Indians. The mountains hold untold millions in gold and precious stones. But the only unbeaten race of natives on American soil means that it shall stay there as long as a San Blas lives to fight for his native land:

Question:—"Please give me the address of some book publisher who sells the following:

"A Book of Precious Stones," by Julius Wadiska.

"The World's Minerals," by L. J. Spencer.

Have you ever heard of a gold mine in the Darien county near the Tuyra River? I am tempted to try prospecting in that neighborhood before trying it elsewhere. Would you advise me to do so?"—S. COACHE, Canal Zone.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—The two addresses you wish are as follows:

Frederick A. Stokes Company, 443-449 Fourth Avenue, New York; attention of Mr. E. G. Larsen.

G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2 West Forty-fifth Street, New York.

Down toward, and almost on, the Colombian border, near the headwaters of the Tuyra River, is located the property of the Darien Gold Mining Company. The mines are ancient Indian workings and have been operated almost without interruption since prehistoric times. It is at present operated under an English charter, but the stockholders and most of the officials are Frenchmen. They used to run a small weekly steamer from Panama City to Marriganti, fifty miles up the Tuyra, and I suppose still do so. The National Navigation Company also make this town in their four days' cruise, during the excursion season, reaching it the next morning after leaving Panama. From Marriganti it is *cayuka* work in the dry season to the terminus of their little diminutive railroad, which runs over to Cana, the location of the mine, but in the wet season they transport freight and passengers clear to the terminus of the road by a stern-wheel, flat-bottomed steamer from Marriganti. The mine is well established and pays regular dividends.

This National Navigation Company of Panama has several English captains who will be able to tell you all about the trip to Cana. If the captain of the *Veraguas* is the same on that as was in charge in 1912 it will be a great treat to talk with him for his adventures have been many and varied in all parts of the many seas, ranging from piling a Royal Mail steamer ashore on the coast of Africa to fighting in the Russ-Japanese war.

Don't try to go overland through the country from where you now are to the Tuyra. It is impossible for it lies in the San Blas and Chucunaque country and they will not allow a white man to pass through. They are the only unbeaten Indians, who run things to suit themselves, that I know of in any part of the world. They defy the Panamanian Government and fear a white man none at all. Gold! They have loads of it. But they are going to hang onto it, no fear about that. The only way to get their gold is to get it in fair trade down the coasts. They will not allow you to remain ashore after night, and when a white man does come ashore all the women and children run and hide until he is gone.

The San Blas, on the Atlantic side, are the worst, but the Chucunaques are not to be laughed at, especially inland from the coast. There is no record of any white man having made the overland trip from Colombia to the zone or vice versa. And many have disappeared in there trying to do it.

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Don't get these San Blas and Chucunaques mixed up with the cholos you see along the zone. Some day when you are over in Colon get some one to point the San Blas out to you. They come in there to trade with sailing canoes. They are little wiry fellows that look almost like Japs and they go about minding their own business. I made friends with several of them, but they are not too inclined to be friendly and the friendship was a one-sided affair, costing me several bottles of good whisky. They boast that no San Blas woman ever gave birth to a half-breed child, and no San Blas man ever fathered one.

Don't take this lightly. The San Blas are bad. And the Chucunaques are bad. I don't blame them. They had enough of white men during the Spanish conquest, when they invited the invaders to visit them and were tortured, roasted alive, thrown to the savage blood-hounds of the Spaniards, and treated in such a manner that a man's blood runs cold at the recounting of it. They are at present well armed, trained and equipped, and neither Panama nor Colombia dares to meddle with them.

The property of the Darien Gold Mining Company is beyond their country and the vague country in between known as the "Darien" is one of the most unknown places, with a few exceptions, on the entire globe. It would take several hundred Americans of the right sort, fighting every foot of the way, to cross it, lengthwise. Don't you boys do anything foolish and go down in there and get killed. If any man there on the Zone, ignorant of this country, should make light of the dangers down there tell him that he doesn't know what he is talking about.

There is no law in the San Blas country against a woman entering it, and one woman, an American lady, used to go down proselyting among them in 1912. It was indirectly through her that I received much information concerning them and their customs. King Carlos made a trip to Panama about that time with his council of young men and when asked why he had come replied: "To look and listen and keep my mouth shut."

The man who knows the most about the San Blas of any one down there is Wilcox, a man who traded down the coast for years, gained a reputation for honesty and fair dealing, and now runs (if he is not dead) a store and lumber yard on the water-front at Colon, across the railroad track from Front Street. Hang around his place and watch the San Blas and get him to point out one that can speak English and ask him about his country.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

WYLIE, GERTRUDE. Your brother Fred would like to find you.—Address SGT. FRED R. BOECHER, H'dq. Co., 4th Artillery, Camp Stanley, Texas.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

AHEARN, ARTHUR. Please communicate with "Ole." —Address J. L. PHELEN, 536 Putnam Ave., Detroit, Mich.

C. B. Please give me your address long enough to indorse Canadian checks.—Address MRS. M. F. WALTERS, Memphis, Tenn.

BUNCH, RAY. Brother. Why don't you write? Am worried and very anxious to hear from you. Please write. EFFIE BUNCH, care of General Delivery, Springfield, Ohio.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

CASLIN, JACK. Of the 2nd Battalion, Connaught Rangers (Irish). Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address "DIGGER" LENIHAN, Box 72, Hillsboro, Texas.

HOFFMAN, WM. Last heard of about 1904. Was then superintendent on the Sherman (Tex.) Division of St. L. & S. F. (Frisco) R. R. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. T., No. 389 care of *Adventure.*

STREMPLE, H. E. Brother. Sailor on some U. S. ship on Pacific Coast. Needed at home badly. Former manager anxious to have him on his old job.—Address MRS. HELEN BOWMAN, 608 E. 105th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

SCHROEDER, PAUL. When last heard from was in France, U. S. Air Service. Has lived in New York and Pennsylvania. Any one knowing of his whereabouts please write.—Address CORP. FRANKLIN W. DRESSEL, 3rd Aero Squadron, Philips Field, Pampanga, P. I.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

HANSEN, EINAR. Last heard of in Camp Pike, Ark. Was then a lieutenant of infantry. Five feet eight inches tall, ruddy complexion, twenty-nine years old. If alive please write your old pal. I am back again where you last heard from me, only in the 5th Co.—Address TOM, L. T., No. 390 care of *Adventure.*

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

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MARCHANT, F. A resident of Philadelphia. An old pal would like to hear from him. He served during the war as a sergeant in C Co., 38th Canadian Battalion, C. E. F.—Address W. G. STOKES (M. M.) Box 1685, Prince Rupert, B. C., Canada.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

KIETH, JOHN M. Please write "Crubine," care of this magazine. Was last seen in the Islands, 36th Co. C. A. C. You remember "Two Soldiers" in Wilmington, Del. Important. Was supposed to come back from the Islands about December, 1916.—Address SGT. T. D. C., L. T., No. 390, care of *Adventure*.

FIRMAN, KENTON W. Was a sergeant in F Co., 18th U. S. Infantry. Stationed at Douglas, Ariz., in 1916-1917. Last heard from as captain, 11th U. S. Infantry, Army of Occupation, A. E. F., in June 1919. Any information will be appreciated.—Address JOS. R. PHILLIPS, care of Rev. T. B. Payne, Brooklyn, Conn.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the First February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

HARRIS, JOE. Age twenty-three, height five feet five inches, weight 130 pounds, near-sighted and eyes crossed. Left home, De Ridder, La., July, 1919. When last heard of was with a show. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. EMMA HOFTOUSTAN, Box 82, De Ridder, La.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First March or Mid-March issues of Adventure. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

BENNETT, JOSEPH; Boarders, Sgt.; Carroll, Sgt. Martin; Danch, Mrs. Mary; Enquist, Clarence; Greeves, J. Gardner; Hornstein, Samuel; Jennings, Floyd; Jones, Edward H.; J. L.; Martel, Leon H.; Members of 213th Battalion, C. E. F.; Mercer, Homer J.; Morrison, John D.; Page, Arthur A.; Phillipson, David; Rozenthal, "Slim"; Sheldon, Willis D.; Shipmates in A. G. of S. S. *Evelyn*, H. M. S. *Flagler* and *El Oriente*; Skinner, Wm. B.; Smolinsky, Louis; Spalding, Joseph Warren; Stout, Capt. A.; Stevens, Charles; Thompson, Sydney A.; Wharton, Bob; Zeller, Lieut. C. A.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL' BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Byron Chrisholm; Wm. S. Hilles; A. B. Paradis; C. E. Hungerford; E. E. S. Atkins; A. Gaylord; E. J. Moran; F. S. Emerson, E. Murphy; J. Dunn; H. Higmon; E. Cunningham; Dennis F. Crolly.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ALLISON, CORP. JAMES T.; Beaton, G. M.; Benson, Edwin Worth; Bryson, Clarence F.; Mr. Brownell; Carpenter, Capt. Robert S.; Carr, Fred; Coles, Bobby; Cook, William N.; Cosby, Arthur F.; Engleby, B.; Garson, Ed.; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter, J.; Hart, Jack; Hines, Joseph; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kuhn, Edward; Kutcher, Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lancaster, C. E.; Larisey, Jack; Lee, Dr. C.; Lee, Capt. Harry; Lee, Dr. William R.; "Lonely Jock"; Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonald, Tony; MacNamee, Alva I.; Madsen, Sgt. E. E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Parrott, D. C.; Raymond, C. E.; Rich, Bob; Rundle, Merrill G.; Scott, James F.; Swan, George F.; Taylor, Jim; Thomas, C. L.; Tripp, Edward; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Wetherell, Corp. D. E.; Williams, Raymond J.; Williams, W. P.; Wood, Basil D.; S 177284; 439; L. T. 348; J. C. H.; W. S. X. V.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address E. F. BRACE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MID-APRIL ISSUE

Besides a complete novel by Harold Lamb and a complete novelette by Barry Scobee, described on page two of this issue, the next *Adventure* brings you nine stories. Here are a few words about them:

MING GOLD — ***By Robert J. Pearsall***

"Masters, do not go!" Thus speaks *Wong*, the Chinese guide, but *Hazard* and *Partridge*, two young Americans working against the insidious Chinese tong, the Ko Lao Hui, find it as dangerous to turn back as to go on.

IKEY BAUMGART'S BURGLARY INSURANCE — ***By Thomas McMorrow***

He is a pawnbroker and a hard man, and at first the Yuletide spirit is amusing to him; but even so he ends by saying "Merry Christmas" and meaning it. A tale of New York City and of a crime that doesn't take place.

THE VAMPIRE — ***By Arthur O. Friel***

Fighting their way through the depths of the Peruvian forests, two young Brazilians seek shelter in a cave, and there find a greater peril than they have yet encountered.

FRENCH HEELS AND BOBBED HAIR — ***By Gregory Mason***

"Going native" isn't so terrible if it's done in northern Mexico during Summertime. But even so, *Eaton Blake* is glad to get back to civilization after he discovers the true meaning of French Heels and Bobbed Hair as affected by *Valentina*.

WILD BLOOD Part III — ***By Gordon Young***

Red Shaylor, saved from drowning by *Hurricane Williams*, challenges his rescuer for mastery of the *Sally Martin*, and the South Sea drama aboard the little schooner shows grim developments.

THE LITTLE PINCH-HITTER — ***By Wilbur Hall***

At sixty years of age the old desert-rat, *Mike Mullen*, makes his strike—a rotten outcrop of gold with a trace of silver and an eight per cent. copper showing in the prospect. And it is in getting a buyer for the claim that the "*Little Pinch Hitter*" comes to bat.

TIME AND TIDE — ***By H. P. Holt***

They wait for no man. And *Captain "Pep" Phillips* swears that neither will he; for ruin faces him if he doesn't shove his freighter's nose into Paraguay on time. Then the storm-god interposes and *Captain Pep* changes his mind.

THE WORM THAT TURNED — ***By A. W. Callisen***

The "worm" is *Tong*, and his turning sends a tremor through the land. For in *Tong* the oppressed millions of China see their own wrongs mirrored.

REMEMBER THE RAISIN — ***By Roy P. Churchill***

Before *Signal Quartermaster "Stormy" Jones, U. S. N.*, takes on a cargo of the new raisin-drink, he sees nothing but shore leave with no money. After he's taken the raisin-drink aboard, he sees nothing but money with no shore-leave. But in the end he has both; and the only sufferer from his escapade is the Navy Regulations.

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PLEASANT AND EFFECTIVE LAXATIVE
IDEAL FOR CHILDREN, AGED PEOPLE AND INVALIDS AS WELL AS FOR ROBUST PERSONS
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The Evolution of the "Comfort Smile"

. . . It invariably starts with Colgate's!

From first stroke of the brush to last stroke of the razor, the Colgate shave is comfortable, no matter which you use—Stick, Powder or Cream.

No wonder the Colgate Smile is a Comfort Smile, for a Colgate shave is a cool one. No matter how tough the beard, the face is left soothed and refreshed.

Nor is there any need to rub the lather in with the fingers—rubbing-in only adds "mussiness" to what might be a genuine pleasure.

Lather with Colgate's—then Shave with Comfort

With the Stick. After wetting the face pass the stick over the cheeks from ear to ear and back again, then under the chin; once across the upper lip. This gives soap enough for any but the heaviest beard. Work up the softening lather on the face with the wet brush—using hot or cold water.

With the Powder. First, wet the face with the brush. Separate the bristles slightly with the thumb and sprinkle about one-third of a thimble full of powder on the brush; you soon learn the exact amount you need. The lather is quickly worked up with hot or cold water—on the face.

With the Cream. If you prefer to apply the cream to the face always wet the face first. If you squeeze the cream on the wet brush, wet the face first. The plentiful fragrant lather is then worked up on the face with the brush—using hot or cold water according to preference.

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Dept.

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